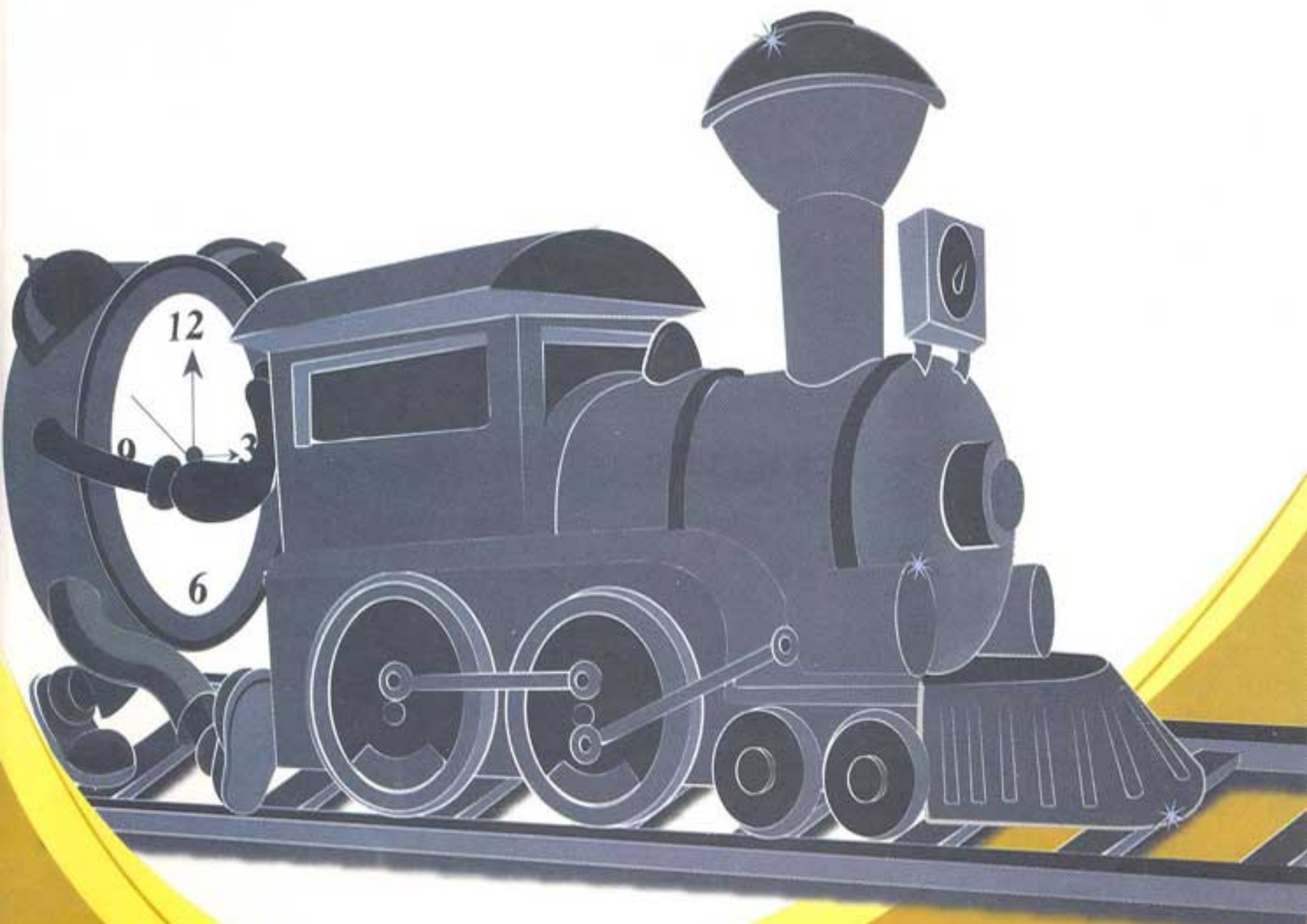


TARBIYAT
SERIES PART - 5

Stories for Living, Loving, & Learning

STORY TIME



Bait-ul-Ilm Trust

Stories for Living, Loving, & Learning

STORY TIME

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▶ **TARBIYAT**
SERIES **5**



Bait-ul-Ilm Trust

Dear Story Timers

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh

It is not easy living in today's world, is it...? Whether we are teenagers or adults, all our lives are filled with so many pressures of everyday living. And we all experience thoughts and feelings like anger, jealousy, pride and the need to be just like or better than those around us.

What do we think of everyday...? What do we see when we look into the mirror every morning.....? Do we see the perfect eyes, nose and mouth or do we just see that big pimple on our cheek instead.....? Are we thankful for the breakfast that mum has prepared for us or do we insist on something different each morning...? Are we happy that dad has taken the time to drive us to school or are we embarrassed to be seen in his car and wish he had a smarter car like our friend's father..?

It's funny how we always notice the things we don't have and not the ones we do...Like how we don't have that latest branded shirt like our friend even though our cupboards are bursting with so many other branded shirts. Or there's that latest computer or cell phone that we must have even though the ones we do have are in good working condition and less than a year old. And then we keep complaining about that pain in our leg or hand without realising that so many disabled people don't even have a leg or hand to complain about. And what about school..? We don't realise its value and are always complaining about how boring and tiresome it is but what about those many children who don't even have a school to go to...? And then there's our parent. The ones we are disrespectful and cause so much pain and worry to. Do we ever realise just how difficult and lonely our lives would be without them...? Think about it!

And then the being that we should be most thankful to Allah Ta'ala. Do we even think about HIM in our busy lives...? Do we ever take the time to thank HIM for everything that HE has given us...? How would we feel if we did everything in our power to make a person happy and comfortable and he doesn't even thank us...? Think about it!

Of course, we are all only human and are bound to feel the way we do but the path to true happiness lies in being content. Of course, there is nothing wrong in trying to improve ourselves and our lives but we should do it so as to please Allah Ta'ala and not with the intention of being better than others. Because as long as we strive to be like others, we will never be happy. Because there will always be someone better off than us. A better idea would be to compare ourselves with those who have less than us and then will we realise just how much we really have and we will become thankful, *InshaAllah*.

Life is short, my little friends. So let's not spend our precious time competing with one another but rather, let's get together and try and improve the lives of those less fortunate than us. And it will make us better and happier people too, I promise.

And now, my dear children - ANOTHER STORY TIME for you to enjoy. Read and practice what you learn from the many stories inside. And remember to thank Allah Ta'ala for all the gifts and blessings HE gives us everyday..!

Wassalam

Nabeel Ahmad

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► **FOR FEEDBACK:**
bit-trust@cyber.net.pk

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Preface

The gardener said, “Children are like flowers.” The writer said, “Children are like books.” The physician said, “Children are like medicines.” The painter said, “Children are like paintings.”

We say, “Children are like mortar... mould them in any shape you please, and solidify them with honesty to make them so strong and robust that no power in the world can ever break them.

All these similes solicit that we think for the right upbringing of our children—the ones who have been entrusted to us by the future. Tomorrow, they will be the builders of our nation, and will sway its leadership. If they are not trained along the right lines or not developed in the right direction or not cared for the chastity of thoughts, the whole Ummah will be a victim of disintegration and disaster in the near future.

Therefore, children should be brought up properly. They should be adorned with chaste thoughts and character. They should be guided about their aims in life from the very beginning. However, these ideas should be imbibed without any compulsion so that they make these virtues part of their personalities and feel interest in them.

This series of books, which is called “Tarbiyat Series”, is designed to achieve this honorable goal. In this book the standards of ethics are measured in parables. The chastity of character is idealized in narratives and the conclusions are drawn in “morals”. The books in this series also have jokes, puzzles and

poems for the interest of children.

In short, this book is one of the best gifts for children which not only has material of their interest but also about your desires and plans that you want to see blooming in your offspring. Further more you will (Insha Allah) find some stuff on those vices from which you want to save your children.

Al-Hamdulillah, today this book is in your hands. We must acknowledge the efforts of Brother Waseem Raja, Brother Syed Nasir, Brother Asim and respected Brother Faisal Zubair Sahib who extended their immeasurable cooperation in the compilation of this book.

We are also thankful to respected sister R. Eesa (of South Africa) for her kind co-operation by preparing a few Hadith stories and doing rectification. Also thankful to respected sister A. Abdur Raqeeb who spent her precious time translating a few stories into English and rectifying the book. May Allah Ta'ala reward them abundantly.

This book is a result of hearty desires of a lot of Mashaikh, Ulama-e-Kiram, and the efforts of friends and teachers of Bait-ul-Ilm Trust.

We pray to Allah Ta'ala to make this book instrumental in rightly bringing up our children and make it popular with the same sentiment and spirit with which it is compiled and produced. May this book become an asset for our Aakhirah.

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FATIMA AND THE VOICE

This is a story about eight year old Fatima, who lived in a small country town with her parents, older brother, Faraaz and younger sister, Naheeda. Fatima was very lucky because her grandparents lived nearby and everyday after madressa she'd stop by their home to say *Assalam-u-Alaikum* and tell them about her day. Her grandparents loved her very much and looked forward to her visit everyday. But sometimes, Fatima didn't feel like visiting them and a voice in her head would tell her that it was okay because she was tired and that it wasn't necessary that she visit them everyday. But then her mother would come into her room and explain to her that good Muslims never worried about their own feelings and always put others first. And besides, Allah loves those who care for their parents and grandparents. The voice in Fatima's head would return and urge her to argue with her mummy, which she would. Fatima always felt sorry afterwards and wondered why she always listened to that voice. It always got her into trouble but she couldn't help listening to it. "I'm probably just a bad little girl, she thought. "I don't think Allah likes me very much."

One day her mother baked some fresh cookies and asked Fatima to take a plateful to her grandmother. The voice came back into her head, telling her to refuse and she was about to, when she noticed that her mother was in a bad mood and she changed her mind. She knew that when she misbehaved whenever her mother was in a bad mood, she was given a punishment. So she smiled at her mother and agreed.

Fatima took the plate and started off towards her grandparent's home. She had barely started her journey when the voice returned and told her that she was feeling hungry and that she should eat some cookies. Fatima knew that she had just eaten cookies with a big glass of milk before setting off to ma's house and that she shouldn't be hungry but as usual, she gave in to that naughty voice and put two cookies into her mouth. She didn't feel very good because she knew that the cookies were her ma's favourite and that she was waiting for them to have with her afternoon tea. But again the voice told her that it was okay because her ma wouldn't mind. So she soon forgot about it and carried on walking. A minute later, she realized that she was feeling for more cookies. Without thinking, she ate a few more cookies and she had just reached her grandmother's front gate when she realized that she had eaten all the cookies. Fatima felt awful and knew that her mother was going to be very angry with her. "It's okay," said the voice again, "Ma will understand. Besides, she has lots of biscuits at her house. You can bring her more cookies later. Now, you will just have to think of a good lie to tell to ma." Fatima didn't feel so bad anymore and ma

opened her front door just as she was busy deciding on what to say.

"*Assalam-u-Alaikum*, my child. Have you brought the cookies? I phoned your mummy this morning and told her that I was getting a visitor and asked her to bake me some cookies. You wouldn't believe it, but your grandfather was so hungry after Fajr salaah this morning that he ate all my biscuits. Come, my child. Come meet my visitor. But first, let's leave the cookies in the kitchen."

Fatima was at a loss for words. She didn't know about the visitor. Now she was in BIG trouble. "Why did she have to listen to that voice again? She knew that it always made her do wrong things and as usual, she still listened to it. And now, even grandma was going to be angry at her and she hated it when ma got angry, because her grandparents always gave her whatever she wanted and so she NEVER wanted to hurt them. "Ma took the plate from her and looked at her in surprise when she felt how light it was. She lifted the cover, looked at the empty plate and then looked at Fatima, waiting for an explanation.

Fatima suddenly felt very sad and was about to tell ma the truth when the voice interrupted her thoughts, 'Fatima, don't be stupid. Think of the punishment your mother is going to give you. And think about how disappointed ma is going to be with you. You'd better lie quickly if you want to save yourself.' Fatima decided that the voice was right and pretended to cry.

"I'm sorry ma, but as I was walking, I tripped on a stone and the whole plate fell, and the cookies got messed in the sand and before I could even try to clean them, a dog ran up to the cookies and gobbled them up."

Ma looked at Fatima sadly and shook her head.

"It's okay, my child," she said. "My visitor won't mind having her tea without any biscuits. Let's go in and meet her. We can discuss this later."

Fatima smiled and felt relieved that ma believed her and as usual, the voice had something to say, 'Did you see how easy it was? Next time will be even easier..!'

Now grandma was a very clever woman and knew that Fatima was not speaking the truth but she loved her granddaughter and didn't want to embarrass her in front of her visitor, so as soon as her visitor left, she took Fatima into her bedroom, sat her down on her bed, took her hands in hers and asked, "My child. Would you like to tell me exactly what happened to those cookies?"

Fatima didn't know what to say...

"But grandma, I told you what happened," she answered, her mind racing with thoughts. She had to get away and the perfect excuse popped into her mind.

"Oh..., look at the time, grandma. Didn't you realise that it's almost time for Asr salaah. You know how angry

mummy gets when I'm late."

Fatima got up from the bed and was almost out the door when ma caught her by the hand.

"Not so fast, little one," said ma, looking at Fatima kindly. "My dear, dear Fatima, I love you with all my heart but I've known you all your life and I know when you are lying. Don't be afraid. Tell me what really happened."

"DON'T TELL HER. DON'T TELL HER...!" the voice screamed in her head, "Think of a better lie quickly. I'll help you. It's easy." Fatima shook her head from side to side and cried, "No...,no...,no..., I love grandma too much. I can't lie to her anymore. Leave me alone. Get out of my head, get out.... get out...!"

Ma looked worriedly at Fatima and asked, "What is wrong, Fatima? Who are you talking to?" But Fatima just sobbed. She was too ashamed. Ma took Fatima in her arms and held her.

"It's okay," she comforted her, "tell ma all about it"

Fatima looked up at her grandmother. She was so afraid, that ma wasn't going to love her anymore and also afraid of that evil voice. Why did it always trouble her so? And why did she always listen to it? Why couldn't Allah make her a good person like ma? Ma was perfect..! She never lied, always.

spoke kindly to others and always tried to help them. Even the beggars who knocked on her door so many times a day didn't irritate her. Fatima felt ma squeeze her hand and knew that she was waiting for an answer.

"What can I say?" She thought, "I'd better tell the truth this time, and you are not going to stop me!" she said to the voice. And guess what? The voice didn't even say a word!

Fatima took a deep breath and began, "Ma, please don't be angry with me. I try so hard to be a good girl but I always end up doing the wrong thing. Mummy thinks that I like to misbehave and annoy her but I don't. It's just that I have this voice in my head and every time I decide to do something good, it interrupts me and convinces me that it would be better and more fun to do something bad.

And also when daddy asks me to help him look for something, the voice makes me tell him that I couldn't find it, even though I never looked for it at all. It even makes me fight with Muhammad Faraaz and irritate Naheeda and I listen to the voice even when I know I shouldn't. I love them all so much and I don't like making them angry, especially Mummy but I can't help myself. Mummy always tells me that ALLAH is the only ONE who can help us but I don't think HE likes me very much. And because I'm such a bad girl, I don't think that HE will even want to help me. I don't know why, ma, but I always end up listening to that ugly

voice, and I feel so bad afterwards. Even with the cookies. I wasn't really hungry but the voice told me that I was and I believed it and I ate up all the cookies. I'm so sorry ma. The voice said that you would understand and I believed it because you always understand and never get angry with me, but I didn't know about the visitor. I'm so sorry ma, please forgive me." ma smiled and turned to Fatima.

"My dear child," she said, "How innocent you are. It's all my fault. I should have told you all about that ugly voice. You see, we all have that voice in our heads.

"We do?" interrupted Fatima, "Even you?" she asked.

"Yes my dear, even me and mummy and daddy and all of Allah's servants. That voice has a name. It is *Shaytaan*."

Fatima became excited. "But I know *Shaytaan*, ma. His name is *Iblees* and he promised ALLAH that he was going to make all of ALLAH'S servants disobedient and that he was forever going to trouble them and make them do bad things. But how can he be the voice in my head? Why is he trying to make only me bad? What about everyone else?" Fatima cried out in fear.

"There are an army of *Shaytaans*, my child. *Iblees* is the leader of all of them and he has sent a *Shaytaan* to each one of us, to be that voice in our heads. Each *Shaytaan*'s job is to encourage us to do wrong and to make bad behaviour

appear good and exciting and fun. And at the end of each day, each Shaytaan reports back to its leader about our behaviour."

Fatima now had an idea "So, ma, what you are saying is that it isn't my fault that I ate the cookies because Shaytaan made me do it? asked Fatima with relief."

"No, Fatima, that's not what I'm saying. It is your fault. You should not have listened to *Shaytaan*. You know right from wrong so you should have just ignored him."

Fatima suddenly felt very bad again and also afraid.

"But how, ma? How can I ignore him when he doesn't leave me alone for a minute? How do you ignore him, ma? Tell me, tell me, please."

"ALLAH helps me." announced ma.

"Whenever I need help, I turn to ALLAH because only HE can help me."

Fatima started to get irritated with ma and screamed out loudly, "I KNOW ONLY ALLAH CAN HELP US. MUMMY ALWAYS SAYS THE SAME THING, BUT....."

"There you go again, listening to *Shaytaan* again. I bet he said that screaming at your grandmother would make you feel good, didn't he?" asked ma.

"Yes, he did," said Fatima quietly.

"And does it make you feel any better? asked ma

"No...," answered Fatima, so softly that ma hardly heard her. "You see," said ma, "He's not always right. In fact, he is always wrong."

Fatima looked sadly at ma, her eyes quickly filling up with tears, "I'm sorry, ma. I want ALLAH to help me, too. Please tell him to help me. Please ma, HE won't listen to me but I know that HE will listen to you because you are always good."

Ma's face broke out into a broad smile. "Did you ask ALLAH to help you?" she asked Fatima.

"No, I didn't, because I knew that HE wouldn't help me because I am always so naughty."

"Fatima, Fatima, Fatima, when you need anything, don't you ask mummy? asked ma.

"Yes, I do," answered Fatima, not understanding what ma was trying to get at." Ma continued,

"And if she is sad or in a bad mood, does she still help you?" asked ma.

"Of course, she does, ma. She's my mummy. What a silly question..!" laughed Fatima.

"Well," said ma, "you're right. It is a silly question. Mummies love us always, don't they. Well, then you see. ALLAH created us and He loves us more than even our mummies and daddies and mas too! Even when HE is angry or sad and even when we are naughty or bad. HE loves us so much and HE loves us even more when we ask HIM for help because then HE knows that we love Him too. So, my dear Fatima, ALLAH knows what the Shaytaan is doing to you and HE is waiting for you to ask HIM for help because HE loves you, no matter what and HE is just waiting to help you."

Fatima was so relieved to hear that ALLAH loved her still, even after she was naughty, but she still had one problem.

"How do I ask HIM, ma? What do I say?"

Ma was glad to see her granddaughter in good spirits again and smiled.

"It's easy, my child. The Shaytaan is ALLAH'S enemy and ALLAH knew that he would always trouble us so ALLAH revealed a short, easy verse for us to read for protection against the Shaytaan and you know what? You know it already..!"

Fatima's excitement grew and she jumped off ma's bed and knelt down on the floor next to the bed at ma's feet.

"Tell me, tell me, ma. What is the verse? Do I really know it?" she gushed.

"Of course you do, my child. Can you remember what I taught you to read before you read your *Tasmiya*. [*Bismillahir-rahmaan-nir-raheem* بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ] The verse is known as *Ta'aw-wuz*," prompted ma.

"I know, I know, it's *A'oozu-billahi-minash-shaytaanir-rajeem*," answered Fatima excitedly.

"And do you know what it means, Fatima?" asked ma, delighted that Fatima had remembered so quickly. Fatima's face went blank as she tried to wrack her brain for the meaning. She knew the verse very well because she used it everyday before reading her Quran and she remembered ma teaching her the meaning but recently when she read the verse, she had stopped reciting the meaning since it took her too long and she didn't think it was necessary.

She looked at ma with a questioning look in her eyes but still didn't ask her for the meaning as she was sure that she would remember and she didn't want ma to know that she had stopped reciting it. Ma watched the expression on Fatima's face change gradually, from one of delight and enthusiasm to one of confusion and shame.

She watched in amusement as Fatima tried to remember the meaning and after a few minutes decided to put her out of her misery. But as soon as ma opened her mouth to speak, Fatima piped,

"I'm sorry, ma. I'm trying so hard to remember but I just can't get it in my head. Please tell me what it is."

Ma was delighted at her granddaughter's interest and asked,

"But don't you recite it everyday after your *Ta'aw-wuz*?" Fatima looked sheepishly at her grandmother and answered,

"No ma. I didn't think it was necessary. But I know my *Ta'aw-wuz*. I read it everyday."

Ma noticed the disappointment returning to Fatima's voice and quickly responded,

"It's okay, my child. We all make mistakes, Yes, don't look so surprised, even me. I also make mistakes and even your mummy and daddy, too. But the trick is to learn from our mistakes and try to never make them again. Now listen carefully and repeat after me a few times. The meaning is...

'I seek protection, in ALLAH, from Shaytaan, the accursed one.'

And that means that we are asking ALLAH to protect us from the Shaytaan. And when ALLAH hears us reciting *Ta'aw-wuz*. He immediately helps us to ignore shaytaan and his whisperings. And if you read it often, *Shaytaan* will know that he is wasting his time and that you have put your faith and trust in ALLAH. So do you know what he does? The moment he hears you recite the *Ta'aw-wuz*, he disappears and leaves you alone. When you decided to tell me the truth, did you say anything to Shaytaan first?" ma asked, as the smile slowly returned to Fatima's face.

"Yes..,I did, ma. I told him that I was going to tell you

the truth and that he should just leave me alone."

"So you see how it works? asked ma, "Once *Shaytaan* knew that you were not going to listen to him, he disappeared because he knew that he was wasting his time. I bet he didn't even answer you, right? asked ma, laughing loudly.

Fatima thought for a moment and smiled widely as she realized that her grandmother was right.

"You're right, ma. When he knew that he was not going to be able to change my mind, he left me alone. I was so upset earlier that I didn't notice it. Is that how I can fight him, ma? she asked. "Must I make up my mind and tell him that I am not going to listen him?"

"Yes, my child. But sometimes it is not so easy to say no to him. And that's why we need the *Ta'aw-wuz*. When we recite it, ALLAH helps us to stand up to *Shaytaan* and say "NO" to him. ALLAH helped you this time because He loves you and didn't want you to be so upset. But from now onwards, whenever you feel that you cannot stand up to *Shaytaan*, read the *Ta'aw-wuz* quickly and you'll see how strong you become. Do you know that *Shaytaan* is ALLAH'S biggest enemy?" she asked.

"Yes, ma. I know that. We learnt that in madressa." she answered. But what has that got to do with this?" she asked, puzzled once again.

"It's got everything to do with it," answered ma. "Imagine

if your dear father, ALLAH forbid, had an enemy who hated him and always tried to hurt him and his family. What would you do? Would you talk to him if you met him and would you trust him and want to do whatever he asked you to?"

Fatima was surprised at ma's question. Daddy didn't have any enemies. Everyone loved him. But she knew how she would behave towards someone who wanted to hurt him. She'd run away as far away as possible from that person.

"No, ma. I won't trust him," she replied, the fear suddenly returning to her voice once again.

"Well then. Remember I told you that ALLAH loves us more than even our own families? So we should also love HIM more than our own families. And HIS enemies should be our enemies. Which is why we should regard Shaytaan as our biggest enemy and we should stay as far away from him as possible. Show him that he has no hold over you and he will eventually leave you alone."

Fatima was confused again.

"But ma," she asked, "how can I love ALLAH more than my parents or even more than you, the person I love the most in the whole wide world?"

Ma smiled her kindest smile, the one she reserved especially for her granddaughter.

"My darling Fatima. It makes me so happy to hear how

much I mean to you, but you do not belong to us. Yes, I know we take care of you and love you to bits but you, like the rest of us, belong to ALLAH تبارك وتعالى and he gave you and your brother and sister to us so that we could take care of you, because HE loves you so much. But just look at everything around you. The air that you breath, the water that you drink, the beautiful flowers and trees in our garden, everything on this beautiful earth, HE made it all and because HE loves us so much, HE has given it to us to enjoy. And what about our perfect bodies. Look at yourself. ALLAH has given you eyes, ears, hands, legs, a nose, a mouth, and so many other things so that you can see and eat and smell and run and jump and play. So that you can do so many of the things that you enjoy doing. And for all that we have to be thankful to HIM and do you know something? The more we thank ALLAH, the more HE will give us..! *INSHA'ALLAH!*"

Fatima, for once was at a loss for words. She hadn't thought about all that and although she knew that ALLAH had made everything, ma made her see it differently.

'How much ALLAH loves me..!' she thought. 'I am so lucky. HE has given me everything I have. No wonder mummy and ma keep telling me that I must love HIM, too. HE has given me so much and the only thing that I have to do to make HIM happy is to ignore HIS enemy, the *Shaytaan* and be a good and kind girl. How easy that is..!'

Fatima's heart suddenly felt so full of happiness, she thought it would burst. She jumped to her feet, pulling her grandmother up with her.

"Thank you, ma." she said, "Thank you for teaching me how to fight ALLAH'S enemy. I will never let him tell me what to do again."

"Ma smiled wearily. She was old and her afternoon with Fatima had made her tired.

"I know, my dear. But remember that it's not going to be easy. Now that *Shaytaan* knows that you have decided to be true to ALLAH alone, he is going to bother you even more. He is going to try even harder to win you over to his side. But you have to be strong and firm, no matter what he offers you. The best way to do this is to remember that ALLAH can give you more than what *Shaytaan* can and that if ALLAH wants to, HE can destroy *Shaytaan* in one second."

Fatima's confusion returned. "Then....why doesn't HE, ma?" she asked slowly, almost afraid of the answer.

"HE can't," said ma, "because HE promised to let *Shaytaan* run free till the Day of Qiyaamat and ALLAH never breaks HIS promise. So even if you do listen to that voice in your head, stop immediately and ask ALLAH to forgive you and to protect you from *Shaytaan* and promise yourself and ALLAH that you will never be bad again. ALLAH always forgives us, my child, no matter what we do or how bad we are.

"No matter how bad we are?" asked Fatima, finding it difficult to believe ma's words. "Are you sure, ma?"

Ma laughed softly.

"I am very sure, my child. You see, ALLAH loves us

too much to hurt us. Now, my child. It's already time for Asr salaah. Why don't you join me. But first, phone your mummy and tell her that you are going to be late. You know how she worries about you."

Fatima walked slowly to the telephone, her mind teeming with thoughts.

'I am never going to be bad again,' she promised herself and ALLAH تبارك وتعالى. And you'd better stay out of my mind. 'she warned *Shaytaan*.' From now onwards, I listen only to ALLAH and my parents and grandma too, as long as they tell me to do what ALLAH likes. 'Before lifting the receiver to call her mother, Fatima turned towards the *Qiblah*, raised her hands and prayed to ALLAH,

"Oh ALLAH, help me fight the *Shaytaan*, and also make me so good and kind that You will always be happy with me. *INSHA'ALLAH..!* Aameen."

And from that day onwards, Fatima always tried to fight *Shaytaan*. Sometimes she did so well in fighting him but at other times, she'd forget, especially when she was busy playing with her cousins and friends. But she'd stop whatever she was doing the moment she remembered her promise, because she knew, that no matter what she did, ALLAH would always forgive her because HE loved her, more than anyone else in the whole world.

| the end |

A KIND WORD

Faraaz became more and more annoyed as the noise coming from the children's room increased. He stood up quickly and walked to the room angrily. He opened the door just as his brother Faisal was about to throw a pillow at their youngest brother Asim who was jumping on the bed.

"What's going on in here?" shouted Faraaz as he glared at them angrily.

"Umm... no, nothing." spluttered Faisal. "Asim threw away my pencil and ..."

"No bhai," interrupted Asim. "Faisal stood on my sharpener and broke it."

"Don't lie," said Faisal. "You were..."

"Stop it..! Both of you." screamed Faraaz. "Enough..! I am tired of both of you and your lies..! This room is in a mess. Everything is upside down. Now clean up this mess immediately and then sit down quietly and do your homework."

Faraaz sighed as he left the room. He just could not understand why his two younger brothers refused to listen to him. He was the eldest brother. It was his duty to reprimand them whenever they did wrong and to teach them good manners and respect. But what Faraaz did not understand was that he was going about his duty the wrong way and that his brothers ignored him because he scolded them for every little thing and they were tired of it.

The next day, Ammi told them all that their cousin Irfan bhai, would be coming to spend a few days with them. Irfan was in university and was now on holiday after just writing his B. Com exams. Faisal and Asim both jumped up in joy as they were very fond of Irfan bhai. They then quickly completed their homework so that they could go out to play football. One of Faraaz's rules was that no playing was allowed until all homework was completed. Faisal fetched the ball and called to Asim as he ran out of the house. Asim, who wanted the ball first, put out his leg and tripped Faisal. Faisal called out in pain as he fell to the floor and the ball rolled towards Asim, who quickly picked it up. Asim was just about to run out the door when Faraaz caught him by the collar and dragged him inside.

“What is your problem?” asked Faraaz. “Why are you two always fighting?”

Faisal, who had gotten up from the floor, ignored Faraaz and grabbed the ball out of Asim's hands. Faraaz grabbed Faisal's hand before he could run away and pulled both him

and Asim into the lounge. He pushed them both onto the sofa, pulled the ball out of Faisal's hands and stared at them angrily.

"It's about time you two learnt to behave." He said. "If you insist on fighting with each other, then you will do it indoors. I will not have the two of you fighting on the street where everyone can see just how bad-mannered you are!"

The two boys knew that there was nothing they could do, so they sat back on the sofa angrily, whispering to each other every few seconds about how unfair Faraaz was. Faraaz ignored them and sat down to do his college work at the centre table, where he could keep an eye on the boys. The boys watched him do his work and after a while, Faraaz looked up and said to them, "Bring me some water, you good-for-nothing boys" Faisal was hurt by Faraaz's comment and stood up and said, "Since I am good-for-nothing, I will not bring you anything. You can get your water yourself!"

Faraaz could not believe what he was hearing. He stood up quickly and slapped Faisal hard across the face.

"You will do as I say. Now go and get me that water." Faisal started crying. His mother, who had heard everything, quickly hurried into the room.

"What has happened, Faisal. Why are you crying?" she asked. "Faraaz bhai has slapped me." he answered.

“Why..., Faraaz....?” asked Ammi, her anger rising. She had tried not to interfere with Faraaz’s method of disciplining the boys but she knew that this time he had gone to far. And today she was going to tell him so.

“Faisal did not obey me, Ammi.” said Faraaz. “You know how disrespectful he can be.”

“But that was because Bhaijan had insulted Faisal first,” said Asim.

Ammi was just about to say something when they were interrupted by the doorbell. Faraaz opened the door and saw Irfan standing on the doorstep. The two younger boys shrieked in delight when they saw Irfan and they ran to hug him, forgetting all about their earlier problem.

“Take it easy boys. You don’t have to scream so loudly.”

“It’s okay,” laughed Irfan. “All children scream and shout when they are excited. I am just as excited to see them,” said Irfan, as he hugged them tightly.

At that moment they heard the Azaan and they all went to the Masjid to pray Maghrib. When they got back, they had some tea and then Faraaz showed Irfan to the guest room. He then went into the boys’ room and was infuriated when he saw the state it was in.

“What is wrong with you two?” he asked. “What did you do to this room? Ammi just cleaned it this morning and

now everything is upside down. Well, there's no time to clean it now. You can do it tomorrow morning. It is already your bed time. Just switch off the light and go to bed."

Irfan entered the room and seeing the boy's long faces, he asked, "What's the matter?"

"Oh Irfan." complained Faraaz. "These two are little scamps. It is already past their bed time and they insist on playing. If they do not sleep now they will not be able to wake up for Fajr salaah tomorrow."

A big grin spread across Irfan's face. "You know, boys," he explained. "I was just like you two. But then someone once said to me that Nabi ﷺ has commanded us to sleep early so that we are able to wake up early the next day. And I have followed that advice ever since because Nabi ﷺ always tells us to do what is best for our minds and bodies. So finish up your talk and go to sleep."

"Ok, Irfan bhai," said the boy's together. "Good night and Allah Hafiz."

Faraaz could not believe how easily the boys had listened to Irfan. He felt a pang of jealousy when he realise that the boys showed more respect to Irfan than to him.

The next morning, when Faraaz and Irfan returned from their after Fajr walk, Ammi asked them to wake up the boys. Faraaz got upset again to see that they were still sleeping.

He stormed into their room, pulled the covers off them and screamed, "Faisal, Asim! Get up!! It's almost eight o'clock. You should have been up hours ago. See what happens when you don't sleep early? You never listen to me..!"

Irfan heard Faraaz's bellowing and came into the boy's room.

"Faraaz," he asked politely. "Why are you always scolding these poor children?"

"It's because they never listen to me," said Faraaz.

Irfan said nothing and gently said to the boys, "Come on, boys. It's time to wake up. Your breakfast is ready and will get cold if you don't wake up soon. Come on, show me what good boys you are!"

The boys jumped up as Irfan began tickling them. Soon they were giggling and laughing with Irfan. Faraaz turned around and walked out of the room. He was angry because he felt that his importance was being undermined. Ammi noticed his grim face and asked him what the matter was but he kept silent. After breakfast, Irfan took the two small boys to the park. He asked Faraaz to join them but Faraaz didn't. He was too upset and after they left, he went to Ammi and asked,

"Ammi, tell me. Why do Faisal and Asim never listen to anything I ask and yet Irfan just has to ask once and they do it immediately?"

“My dear Faraaz,” said Ammi gently. “I’ve noticed that every time you speak to your brothers, you do so in a harsh tone. You never show any interest in their lives and never ask them about anything in their lives. The only time you do speak to them is to reprimand them. Not once have I heard a word of praise or kindness pass your lips and you must remember that all people— even you and me— always respond better to kindness.

Did you know that Nabi ﷺ showed extra love and gentleness towards the young and encouraged his Sahaba to do the same? Irfan gives them the same message as you but he uses a more gentle tone and so the boys respond better to him. And you must also remember. The boys are still so little. They cannot stay clean and tidy all the time. And when the weather is too hot, they have to play in their room which cannot stay neat all the time. How will they learn to clean up their room if they never make it dirty, huh? And even if they do get a bit naughty and reckless, if you speak to them gently like Irfan does, they will respect you more and do whatever you ask of them, not because they have to but because they want to. Remember, Faraaz. If you want them to respect you, then you have to show respect to them too. And since you are the person they look up to, they will learn from your behaviour. So you have to set a good example to them. If you speak to them with kindness, they will speak in the same manner to others.”

Just then the front door opened and Faisal ran into the room. He looked at them both and smiled. “We forgot

to take the ball. I came back for it," he said.

As Faisal ran down the stairs, Faraaz noticed that he had left his room door open.

"Faisal," he called out. "You've left your room door open. Please close it before you leave."

Faisal stared at Faraaz in shock. He couldn't believe the change in tone in Faraaz's voice and immediately ran upstairs, shut the door and called out as he ran outside, "Sorry, Faraaz bhai."

Faisal's apology shocked Faraaz and he called out to his brother, "It's okay, Faisal. We all forget sometimes."

The look of love and respect on Faisal's face filled Faraaz's heart with joy. Now he finally understood the importance of kindness and mercy. And of course the meaning of Nabi ﷺ's hadith,

"HE IS NOT ONE OF US WHO DOES NOT SHOW MERCY TO OUR LITTLE ONES AND DOES NOT HONOUR OUR OLD." [Tirmidhi Shareef Bab-Ma'ja'a fi rahmati sibyan # 1919]

THE STRANGER

A passerby once entered a Masjid while the Maghrib prayers were being read and so he joined the congregation. After the prayers, the townspeople noticed this newcomer and crowded around him. Now these townspeople were very generous and courteous towards their guests and when they noticed how thin and skeleton-like the stranger's body was, they immediately offered to bring him some food.

However, when he was brought some food, the stranger said that he could not eat it. He was told that the food was home-made, cooked with a minimum of oil and spices but the stranger still refused. Seeing how distressed the townsfolk were becoming, he then offered a further explanation.

"I am very sorry but I can only eat food that is made from totally halal sources. You know, these days our society is so corrupted that it is becoming difficult to distinguish halal from haram. And if one eats from haram food, then both his prayers and duas are not accepted by Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى. Which is why I refuse to partake of any meal unless I am a hundred percent sure that it is from halal sources."

The man who had brought the food became upset and explained,

“My dear fellow. How can you even suggest that my food is haraam. I am an honest fruit trader and all my money is acquired through legal business. You need not question the nature of my food.”

“Thank you,” answered the stranger. “But tell me, is your business totally interest free?”

The man replied, “I cannot answer that with a certainty. Sometimes I have to borrow money and I pay an interest on it.”

“Then I must say with regret that I cannot eat your food.” said the stranger. “This is because your profit is not one hundred percent interest-free. I do not wish to hurt your feelings but I am helpless in this matter. I hope that you will be able to forgive me.”

The fruit trader felt very ashamed and realising that the stranger still needed to be provided with food, he went to his neighbour, a doctor in the local hospital, and asked him if he would take some food to the stranger.

When the doctor presented the food to the stranger, he too was questioned about the source of his income. He replied proudly,

“I am a doctor. I earn Rs. 5000 from my work at the hospital and Rs 4000 from elsewhere. My son works in a

court house and due to the many bribes he receives, *Alhamdulillah*, we make a lot of money and lead a comfortable life.”

After hearing this story, the stranger politely refused the food as the source of the doctors income was not totally halal.

The doctor was very embarrassed and discussed the matter with the fruit trader. They approached other people to feed the trader but each person had a questionable income.

A zamindar [fuedal] could not send food as he received interest from his customers who pawned their assets to him. A religious person was refused as he did not give his sister her share of inheritance after their father's death.

Person after person was refused and soon the evening turned to night. It was now after ten o'clock at night and the stranger had still not accepted any food, quoting and explaining the following verse from the Quran...

'EAT HALAL AND TAYIB [PURE] FOOD
FROM THE EARTH' [Surah Baqarah Ayah #168]

The entire town was in a state of uproar. Each person kept asking another to feed the stranger but nobody could, because every person had a degree of haram income mixed together with their halal income. Everybody was ashamed of the state of their affairs and they all kept discussing it. Finally, around midnight, the religious person stood up and declared,

“ I will give my sister her share of the inheritance!”

The doctor's son declared, “I will stop taking bribes and will give away all the money I have earned from it!”

And slowly, one by one, every person stood up and declared his intention to give up all haram business.

They then all went to the Masjid and told the stranger of their intentions. The stranger fell into sajda and thanked Allah Ta'ala. His job was done..! He then left the Masjid.

The next morning, when the people went to thank him for opening their eyes to the truth, he was nowhere to be seen.

How perfect a method did the stranger use. He did not preach constantly nor did he make any long, boring speeches. And yet, in less than a day, he had reformed the lives of so many people.

And so it IS true that....

“ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS”

THE COMPULSORY QUESTION

Hazim's pen flew swiftly and easily across the paper as he filled in the answers to the questions in his exam paper. He completed the first question in no time at all, read through it to check if the answer was written perfectly and then read the second question. He had barely written two lines when he lifted his pen. He didn't know what to write. He reread the question and tried to formulate the answer in his mind before writing it down but his mind was blank. Five minutes passed and still Hazim could not recall the answer to the question. He looked around the hall and saw that the other students were all busy writing. He seemed to be the only one with a problem. His throat dried as he glance at his watch. He had now already wasted fourteen minutes out of the three hours allotted to him for the paper. He couldn't believe what was happening.

Hazim looked back at his last answer, cancelled the two lines he had written and decided to start afresh. He wrote down a few words and then his mind blanked out again. He put down his pen and put his head in his hands.

"Oh my Allah...! What is happening to me? You know

how many times I've studied the entire book. I knew everything there was to know and now it seems as if everything has just been erased from my mind. Why is it happening to me? What must I do now? I have only one hour and forty five minutes left to solve three long questions. Please help me!"

Hazim ignored the second question and attempted to tackle the third one. But no answer came. It was as if he had never studied at all. Hazim looked at his answer sheet and noticed that he had only answered one question in the entire paper. Hot tears burned the back of his eyes and a lump rose in his throat as he started to panic. This couldn't be happening to him...! He was the smartest student in his class and all his teachers had high hopes for him. This exam was his medical board exam and he was hoping to score a minimum mark of ninety percent so that he could get onto the Medical College Merit List. His father was a famous neurosurgeon and his one elder brother was already studying in a medical college.

He wanted the same but today it looked as if he wouldn't be able to pass even this one paper. Hazim was busy contemplating his future when the boy behind him poked him in his back.

"Hazim," the boy whispered. "Have you answered the first compulsory question yet?"

"What compulsory question?" asked Hazim in surprise.

“I haven’t seen any compulsory question.”

Hazim scanned his question paper and saw written at the top of the paper in bold print.

‘QUESTION NO.1 IS COMPULSORY.’

Hazim could not believe his stupidity. He had attempted all the other questions but had not even seen this compulsory question that carried twenty marks. He read the question and was surprised to see that it had nothing at all to do with the subject he was being tested on. He stared at the question in disbelief and as he did, he felt drowsy as question marks danced before his eyes. He started crying uncontrollably and his body jerked as his eyes opened suddenly. He had been dreaming.

“Thank God,” thought Hazim. “Thank God it was just a bad dream. But what if it really happens? What if this is a sign that it’s really going to happen? What will I do then?”

It was three AM but after being so shaken by the dream, Hazim decided to ignore his tiredness and study. He went over all those questions that he couldn’t answer in his dream. Hazim could not get the dream out of his mind and spent the next few days studying all the time. He hardly slept and spent every possible moment with his books.

A few nights later, Hazim had another disturbing dream. He was back in the examination hall and his mind was blank again. But this time, he nudged his best friend who was sitting

in front of him for help with an answer. To his horror, his friend stood up and said to the examiner, "Sir, this boy is disturbing me."

The examiner hurried over and slapped him hard across his face. In an instant his eyes flew wide open and Hazim realised with relief that it was just a dream again. Hazim felt cold and was shocked to see that his entire body was drenched in a cold sweat. He hugged the blanket around him and thought hard of what he should do. He decided that he needed help and remembered having heard long ago that there were many pious men who could interpret dreams. He lay down in his bed as he decided on what he would do.

So the next day, Hazim walked to the Masjid. He entered it just as the Asr prayer was ending and he waited at the back for the other men to leave. When he saw that the Imam was alone, he hurried over, made salaam and informed the Imam of his problem. He asked the Imam if his dreams held any special message for him. The Imam affectionately put his hand on Hazim's head and smiled warmly at him. Hazim immediately felt so much better. The Imam asked him,

"My son. Tell me, how many times do you pray in a day?"

Hazim immediately dropped his head in shame as he tried to think up an answer.

"Iman Sahib," he began. "The thing is that I am so busy with my studies that I do not have much time for praying."

My exams are fast approaching and because I sleep so late at night, I cannot wake up for Fajr. I come back home from the college at three in the afternoon and I am usually so tired that I drop off to sleep almost immediately. At around five p.m. I go to my coaching academy where I am given tests which I cannot leave to go and perform my Maghrib. When I get back home, I am so busy preparing for the next day's tests and assignments that I don't even remember to pray Esha. Eventually, around midnight, I go to sleep so that I can be up again in time to attend the college at eight a.m."

The Imam listened quietly and then asked, "Tell me, my son. Do you make the time to eat?"

"Oh, yes," replied Hazim. "I have to eat or else my body would not have the energy that allows me to study and get around. But I usually just have a sandwich or something that doesn't waste too much time," he added quickly when he realised the reason behind the Imam's question.

"I see," said the Imam. "The way I see it is that your mind is trying to send you a message through your dreams. You take the time, no matter how little, to feed your body so that it can carry out its essential functions but you do not take the time to feed your mind. And so your mind is starving, which is why it appears empty in your dreams. It has received no nourishment from you over the past months and cannot function properly without this nourishment."

"But," interrupted Hazim. "How must I feed my mind?"

I study all the time and I know that I know all my work. So how can it still be empty?"

"It's not your studies that feed your mind," answered the Imam kindly. "You need to feed your mind with spiritual activities. Actions that will bring you closer to the Creator of your mind and body, Allah Ta'ala. Only once you achieve closeness to HIM, will your mind be at peace with itself and will feel fulfilled and happy."

"But how can I achieve this closeness, Imam Sahib?" pleaded Hazim.

The Imam gestured to Hazim to sit closer to him. Then he smiled kindly as he spoke, "You know Hazim, these days many of us have lost sight of our real purpose on this earth. While Allah تبارك وتعالى wants us to study hard and achieve as much as we can in this world, HE also expects us to show obedience, reverence and gratitude to Him. Imagine if you gave a poor student the money he needed to become a doctor. Wouldn't you want him to thank you? And maybe show his gratitude by not charging you for his services? Well we owe the same gratitude to Allah and what better way to show this gratitude than by spending our time and knowledge in HIS path? It is no use gaining so much knowledge if we cannot use it to benefit the Ummah or if it sends us further away from our Creator."

"But Imam Sahib," interrupted Hazim. "You still haven't told me how to feed my mind."

“Okay.” Said the Imam. “But first answer this question. If a friend came to visit you only when he needed something from you, how would you feel about it and would you happily help him continuously?”

“That’s easy, Imam Sahib,” laughed Hazim. “I’d feel like he was only using me and I’d tell him that I would not help him in future”

“Okay,” smiled the Imam. “Answer this question. Do you make dua and how often do you do it?”

Hazim now began to feel a bit embarrassed. “Weeeell, I make dua many times but mainly when I need Allah’s help” he answered.

“Well,” said the Imam. “If you felt used by your friend and refused to help him in future, how do you expect Allah, the King of all the Worlds, to feel when the only time you turn to Him is when you need something from Him and the rest of the time you act as if HE doesn’t exist?”

A smile lit up Hazim’s face as he realised what the Imam was trying to say.

“You are right, Imam Sahib. And I remember now that the compulsory question in my dream was about salaah. It didn’t make sense at the time but now I understand it. Is the answer salaah?”

“Yes, my son,” answered the Imam happily. “By performing

your salaah regularly you are feeding your brain as well as drawing closer to Allah, which is the answer to all your problems. Do you know that there is a hadith of our beloved Nabi ﷺ that tells us that the first action we will be questioned about on the Day of Qiyamah will be about our salaah. Because you neglected the most important act of worship which would be the cause of your downfall on the Day of Qiyamat, your dream showed how unprepared you were for Allah's test by making you unprepared for your worldly test. You are very lucky that Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى has given you a second chance. So ask Allah's forgiveness and make the time for your salaah, regardless of how busy you are and you will see how easy your life will become, *Insha Allah.*"

Hazim was very relieved to have finally found a solution to his problems and he decided at that very moment to change the way he led his life. The Azaan sounded as it was time for the Maghrib prayer and Hazim joined the other men in salaah behind the learned Imam.

That night, Hazim rearranged his entire schedule and realised that many of the so-called extra classes he took were unnecessary. He soon became a regular at the Masjid and spent a lot of his time in the Imam's company, learning as much as he could about Islam. He did this even during exams and he still did very well in his exams and was admitted into medical college.

Hazim soon qualified top of his class and became a famous, much respected doctor. When he was asked the secret

for his success, he replied,

“Success can only be attained through Allah and it was only after I introduced regular prayer into my life that I began to achieve true success. And this is why I encourage all my friends, patients and you too, the reader, to do the same, *Insha' Allah...!*”

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FINGERPRINTS

Mr Jamal Aziz had just raised his cup of coffee to his lips when he heard the doorbell ring. He put down his cup and called out to his servant Shahid to open the door and bring in the guest. Shahid let in a young man whose name was Karim. He had come after reading an advertisement for an Urdu expert that Jamal ad placed in a newspaper.

"I'm coming about the advertisement," he said to Jamal.

"Sure," answered Jamal with a smile. "Do sit down."

The doorbell rang again and Shahid brought another young man into the room. This man's name was Ahmad and he was also answering the advertisement.

"Please sit down," said Jamal, showing Ahmad the chair. Jamal then rose from his chair and walked to a side table where he made two cups of coffee for his guests. However, as he was carrying the tray towards the table, his hand knocked against the table and pushed over a cup of coffee. The coffee fell all over the tray and onto his clothes as well.

“I’m really sorry,” said Jamal to the two men. “Please just give me a few minutes while I just change my shirt. I’ll be right back.”

When Jamal returned, he saw the two men and Shahid staring at the floor with shocked looks on their faces. When he looked down, Jamal gasped in surprise.

“What has happened to my cat?” Jamal asked the men.

“It’s dead,” said Shahid. “It dropped dead a few seconds after drinking a few sips of spilled coffee from your saucer.

“What..? That’s impossible! Are you sure?” asked Jamal.

“Yes.” replied Ahmad. “It was walking around the room quite nicely until it sipped from your coffee. Then it just dropped dead.”

“I think there may have been poison or something in your coffee,” offered Karim.

“Maybe not,” interrupted Ahmad. “Maybe the cat was just sick or it ate something outside before coming into the room.”

“There was nothing wrong with my cat,” said Jamal, his anger rising. “It was definitely the coffee. Which one of you put poison into my coffee?”

The other three men looked at him in surprise.

“Sir..! How can you even suspect me?” asked Shahid.

“I am your old and trusted servant who’s served you well over the years. Why would I want to harm you?”

“Yes, you are right, Shahid,” agreed Jamal, nodding his head. “It can only be one of you two,” he said, looking at the two men.

“But we don’t even know you,” said Karim. “Why would we want to kill you?”

“This is outrageous!” shouted Ahmad, rising from his chair.

“I will not stand here and be accused. I’m leaving!”

“Nobody’s going anywhere,” said Jamal. “I am phoning for the police right now!”

“But sir,” said Karim. “How can you accuse us. Your coffee was already in front of you when we arrived. If anybody had a chance or motive to poison the coffee, it has to be your servant. He must have prepared your coffee and he knows you much better than we do.”

“Yes he does.” agreed Jamal.

“But he’s been loyal to me for many years. As for the coffee, I prepared it myself.”

“I just remembered,” said Shahid, looking at Ahmad. “I saw Mr Karim out in the hall going to the bathroom. That means you were alone in this room for a few minutes. YOU

must have put the poison into the coffee!”

“How dare you accuse me, you servant? You didn’t see me do it and didn’t our Prophet ﷺ teach us not to accuse people without having witnesses. Who are your witnesses. The cat and the chairs? Huh? Tell us..!” exploded Ahmad.

“Now calm down, Mr Ahmad,” said Jamal. “Why don’t we just let the police inspector decide who’s telling the truth and who’s not.”

The police inspector, being a very good friend of Jamal’s hurried over as quickly as he could. He listened to the mens’ stories and then smiled. But before he could speak, Shahid stood up and said,

“Before you begin, I just want to say something. Mr Ahmad was the only person alone with the cup of coffee when Mr Karim went to the bathroom. I was in the hall outside. But like he says, I didn’t see him with the poison myself and I don’t have any witnesses, so I hope you have some other method of catching him.”

“Oh, but I do, Shahid. Don’t you worry. It will be very easy to catch the criminal,” he said.

“These days all we have to do is check the accused’s fingerprints and we’ll be able to prove him innocent or guilty in a matter of a minutes.”

“Fingerprints?” asked all the men, together.

“Yes, fingerprints,” answered the inspector.

“That’s impossible,” said Ahmad. “There’s no such thing.”

“Oh, but there is, Mr Ahmad,” said the inspector. “The criminal must have left his fingerprints somewhere around this room. There are billions of people living on this planet. But every single individual’s fingerprints are different from another’s. The delicate lines that we see on our fingers have un-identical patterns, specific to each of us. Just as we all have different faces, so too are the imprints on our fingertips different from each other. None of the fingerprints from any of the ten fingers can be identical with any other person’s fingerprints. Is the power of Allah تبارك وتعالى not amazing that HE could create millions of beings, each made up so totally different from the other and each with their own identity? The sign of Allah’s Greatness surely lives within us all!”

“But inspector,” asked Ahmad. “How will you find out which person is the killer? We have all sat in this room together and so all our prints are in this room.”

“Yes, I know that.” agreed the inspector. “But only one person’s fingerprints will be on the poison. Mr Ahmad, can you please take a seat elsewhere in the room. I would like to inspect that rumpled piece of paper lying near your chair.”

“It’s just some dirt,” said Ahmad quickly. “I’ll just throw it into the bin.”

“Not so quickly, Mr Ahmad,” said the inspector, as he

rose from his chair to inspect the paper. "I have visited this home many times and never have I ever noticed dirt lying around anywhere. I am certain that it is in this very piece of paper that the poison was brought into this room by the person intending to kill Mr Jamal. I'm sure that his fingerprints are on the paper. My team will be able to tell us in a few minutes, after we have taken everyone's fingerprints first."

"But....wait," sputtered Ahmad. "You can't do this!"

"What's the matter, Mr Ahmad?" asked Jamal. "If you are innocent as you say, then surely you wouldn't mind having your fingerprints tested."

"It's not that," said Ahmad, laughing nervously. "It's just that..."

"Just what, Mr Ahmad?" interrupted Jamal, impatiently. "You are holding up the investigation. Inspector, please get on with the testing."

"No!" said Ahmad, quickly. "There's no need. I did it! I brought in the poison. I'm sorry, Mr Jamal but I was hired by your opposition to poison you. I realise now that it was wrong but the offer of so much money was too much of a temptation. I'm glad now that my plan didn't work. I hope that you can forgive me."

"I forgive you my son," said Jamal sadly. "But it's Allah's forgiveness you should seek as it is to HIM that you will have to answer for this deed in the hereafter. He surely loves

you to have given you a second chance- a chance to seek his forgiveness. You know, our beloved Nabi ﷺ has said,

‘ALLAH WILL CONTINUE TO ACCEPT THE REPENTANCE OF HIS CREATURES TILL THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT.’ [Muslim Shareef Babun Istihbabul Istighfar #2702]

So make the most of this chance. It may never come again.”

Tears streamed down Ahmad’s cheeks as the inspector led him out of the room. And as he realised what a grave mistake he had made, he silently asked Allah to forgive him.

SHOOBI'S SECRET

Everybody looked up in shock as Shoobi entered the room. His shoes were caked in mud, his clothes were almost black with dirt and his hair was full of dust. He looked a sight and Daadi Amman [grandmother] gasped in surprise. His parents, held each other tightly to keep from fainting and Waqas bhayya [brother] stood still in surprise.

“Shoobi, my son. What has happened to you?” asked Daadi Amman, breaking the silence.

Abbaji, his father, looked at him in disgust and roared,

“Shoobi Mian! There will be no dinner for you. Clean yourself up properly and come into my study after Esha.”

As Abbaji stood up to leave the room, Saffu baji, Shoobi's aunt, quickly said,

“Amman bi, Shoobi has been coming home in this condition for the past week, but today, he is even more filthy than usual.”

“Shoobi used to very particular about cleanliness.” said

Amman bi. "He always made sure that he was neat and tidy. What happened all of a sudden? He must be mixing with bad company. What else could it be?"

"But Shoobi hasn't met any of his friends this past week," said Saffu baji. "He only goes to school, reads his Quran on his way back and then goes out again. It is when he comes home in the evening that he is in this tired and filthy state. Even his tuition master has noticed that he looks sick."

The family discussed Shoobi while he took a quick bath. He sat quietly in his room and stared at the floor as he thought about Abbaji's anger. Saffu baji saw him and felt very sorry for him. And although he was not allowed any dinner, she secretly brought him some cakes, sweets and a warm glass of milk.

"Shoobi Mian," she said quietly. "Here is a little something for you to eat."

Shoobi was very hungry and ate quickly. He looked at Saffu baji thankfully and said affectionately, "Jazakallahu Khairan, my dear Saffu baji."

After Esha, all the family members gathered on the patio. They were all relaxing in the cool night air after a long, hot day. But everyone's thoughts were on Shoobi Mian.

"Where is Shoobi Mian?" asked Abbaji, looking around.

"He is waiting for you in the study" said someone.

“Ask him to come in here,” said Abbaji. “I will question him in front of everyone.”

Waqas went to the study to call him and when Shoobi entered, he went straight to his mother and sat on her lap. Abbaji looked at him angrily and so he got up from Amman’s lap and sat on the bed.

“Now Shoobi,” said Abbaji. “What have you been up to these days?”

“Suspicious activities,” interrupted Waqas but stopped talking when Ammi gestured to him to keep quiet.

Abbaji looked at Shoobi and said, “Shoobi, remember one thing. I only want the truth.”

“Don’t worry, Abbaji,” said Shoobi. “I won’t lie to you. I hate lying because our Nabi ﷺ has prohibited us from lying.”

“Then why the secret activities, Shoobie?” asked Abbaji.

“I am not doing anything in secret, Abbaji,” said Shoobie. “It’s just that I didn’t want to advertise what I was doing as I was afraid that that would decrease the rewards.”

“Rewards for what , Shoobie? What have you been doing?” asked Amman.

Shoobie continued, “There is a new student in our class, Majid. He is very nice and quite good at his studies.

Because of his good manners, he is popular with both students and teachers. In fact, he and I have become very good friends. But about two weeks ago, he stopped coming to school. So a few of us students went along with our teacher to his house. His family is very poor and work very hard to support his studies. He lives in a slum area. There are open sewerages and filth all around, Abbaji. You wouldn't believe it..! I never knew that people lived in those conditions. The neighbourhood was terrible. None of the houses are cemented. The gardens are covered in overgrown bushes and dirty children were playing around in huge mounds of garbage. Even Majid's home was in a terrible condition. There were flies all over. Majid was in a bed in the corner of the kitchen, which is where he usually slept. He had the chickenpox and had a very high fever. I have never seen anything like it in my life!"

"So what did you all do..?" asked Waqas.

"Well, my teacher spoke to Majid's father for a while and then we left." answered Shoobie. "When we got back to the school my teacher asked us if we knew what caused people to get sick. We answered that it was an unclean environment and he agreed. And then he said to us, 'Well, children. We can fight diseases by making our environment more clean. And I have an idea. I think we can start by cleaning up all the unclean areas in our city. And we should begin in Majid's area. Who will help me?' And so we all agreed to help him everyday after school. Which is where I've been every afternoon."

“What a good idea. But, tell me, what exactly did you all do?” asked Ammi.

“Well,” said Shoobie, with a smile. “Some of us cleaned up the area while the rest of went around to all the homes talking to people about the importance of good hygiene and cleanliness in general. We placed dustbins all over the area and collected money to have the open sewerages cemented. We even spoke to the local council to have the garbage cleared away and then picked up regularly. It took us this entire past week but today we at last managed to complete the cleaning in Majid’s area. Next week we will start in another area.”

Ammaji shook her head in confusion. “But why would you keep such good work a secret?” she asked Shoobie.

“Well, Ammaji,” answered Shoobie. “My teacher said that whatever we do, we should do purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ and not for show. And so I thought that if I told anyone, it would seem as if I were showing off.”

Abbaji stood up and patted Shoobie proudly in the back. “My Shoobie. You have made me so proud. What a good and noble thing to do. You certainly have a very good and caring teacher.”

“Yes, Abbaji,” said Shoobie. “My teacher says that we are all responsible for our environment and if we fulfill our duties, then our earth will become pure and free from pollution of every kind.”

“What wise words,” said Abbaji. “I shall have to meet with your teacher to congratulate him as well as to offer my services. From today, I will join you and your friends clean up our city.”

“Me too,” said Waqas. “And I will ask my friends to join us too.”

“Really, Abbaji, Waqas?” asked Shoobie, in joyful surprise. “Will you really join us? It will be so much fun..!”

“Yes, my dear son,” said Abbaji. “I am just sorry that it took us all so long to realise our responsibilities. But it’s never too late. And may Allah ﷻ accept all our efforts, *Insha ‘Allah!*”

Our beloved Nabi ﷺ said....

A PERSON WHO DOES SOME GOOD WORK IN ORDER TO BOAST, ALLAH THE MOST HIGH WILL EXPOSE HIS FAULT AND A PERSON WHOSE MOTIVE IN DOING SOME GOOD DEED IS TO SHOW IT, ALLAH THE MOST HIGH WILL TREAT HIM AS A HYPOCRITE. [BUKHARI AND MUSLIM]

THE PROUD ROSE

“Will you be my friend?” asked the lonely thorn to the rose.

“What?” replied the flower, in shock. “Be friends with you! I’m not so desperate. Do you even know what you look like? You are a sharp, ugly, good-for-nothing thorn and I am a beautiful flower. How will you benefit me if we are friends?”

The rose, who was very proud of her beauty and sweet fragrance, rejected the thorn’s sincere request with arrogance. The thorn’s eyes welled up with tears. Although both of them were born together on the same rose stem, the flower had hated the thorn from the moment she laid eyes on him. She believed that she was better than the thorn because she was better looking than him. Every time the thorn would glance at her, the rose would say scornfully,

“You are such an ugly creature. How could I ever be friends with you!”

The thorn would stay silent because he believed that the flower was right. And he would often think to himself,

“I am definitely the most useless creature God has ever made. Why would people need thorns to prick them when they could have beautiful flowers instead? Everybody loves flowers but nobody cares about thorns.”

These thoughts would fill the poor thorn’s mind and he would complain to Allah ﷻ about how unfortunate he was.

One day, while swaying on it’s stem, the rose said to another flower,

“Hey.., do you want to know something amazing?”

“What is it, my friend?”asked the other flower.

“That ugly thorn on my twig has actually asked me to be friends with him,” replied the rose with a mocking laugh.

“And did you agree ?” asked the other flower.

“No..! Why should I...? Somebody as beautiful and attractive as me cannot possibly have a friend like that unsightly little thorn...!” replied the rose, looking at the thorn with disgust.

The rift between the flower and the thorn carried on for quite a while until one day, when a few students from the nearby school visited the garden for a picnic. They were overjoyed to see the beautiful flowers. They ran towards the flowers and started pulling them off their stems. The poor

thorn-less plants had no protection and so they offered little resistance when they were handled roughly and most of their pretty petals were torn off as the children effortlessly and mercilessly plucked them from the ground. One boy's eyes fell on the roses and he was immediately attracted to its beauty. But as he tried to pluck out the rose, his finger touched the thorn and was pricked. Blood quickly started pouring from his finger and he began crying loudly. When the teachers saw what had happened, they immediately forbade the children from picking any more flowers. The children turned around and walked away gloomily. They didn't want to disobey the teachers and of course, they didn't want to get pricked by any more thorns.

In the evening, when all the students had left, the flowers and plants looked around them. Leaves, stems and torn petals of flowers were strewn all over the garden. These poor flowers were in this condition because they had had no thorns to protect them. The proud rose looked around her sadly and then said to the other flowers,

"We would have suffered the same fate if it wasn't for our sharp thorns to protect us. Oh, how grateful I am that we have them."

The thorn was ecstatic when he heard the rose's words and for the first time in his life, he felt proud of himself because he had been entrusted with such an important job.

He finally understood for what purpose Allah تبارك وتعالى

had created him. He at once turned towards Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى, asked for HIS forgiveness and thanked Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى for creating him. While he was praying, the flower came to him and asked softly,

“Will you please be my friend?”

The thorn couldn't believe what he was hearing. He looked up at the rose and asked,

“Oh dear, beautiful flower. Am I hearing right? Are you asking me to be your friend?”

“Yes I am,” replied the rose shamefully. “Please do not refuse. I am very sorry for my attitude! Please forgive me and agree to be my friend...!”

“Of course..., dear flower. Why would I refuse your apology?” asked the thorn happily.

“I have been waiting for this day for a very long time. I will be your friend forever, *Insha 'Allah!*”

And from that day onwards the thorn and the flower were great friends.

Our beloved Nabi ﷺ said:

“ONE WHO HAS AN IOTA OF PRIDE IN HIS HEART, WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ENTER PARADISE” [Muslim Shareef, Kitabul Iman #91]

THE CLASS MONITOR

Class 10 B, as usual, seemed more like a fish market than a classroom in a school. It was quite clear from the talking, shouting and laughing that no work was being done by the students. In fact, the students behaved as if they were at a sports centre or a party. On one side was a group of students telling jokes and laughing loudly. On another side were a few students playing a game of badminton, using their books as racquets while two boys were arm-wrestling on a desk in the corner.

Ammar, the class monitor looked around the classroom in despair. He had tried many times to restore some order in the classroom but all his efforts were in vain. Nobody paid attention to him. After all, it was a free period and so they could do whatever they wished. Or so they thought.

It was in fact their Urdu period but since their teacher had been transferred a week ago, and the school had still not found a replacement, the students turned it into a period of fun and games. However, what nobody knew was that today would be different. The school had indeed found a

substitute teacher and he was on his way to the classroom at that very minute.

Suddenly there was a loud bang and all eyes fell on the teacher's desk. Standing in front of the class was a man with a file in one hand and the other hand holding a baton with which he had struck the table. He stared at the now silent class for a few seconds before he began talking.

"My name is Javed Akhtar. I am your new Urdu teacher. Would you be so kind as to inform me why there was so much of noise in this classroom. I could hear it all the way down the hall."

The class remained silent as everyone was too afraid to say anything. After a few minutes of silence, Mr Akhtar lost his temper and angrily asked the class..,

"Who is the class monitor?"

Ammar slowly stood up, shaking like a leaf. He was afraid that he would be punished for not controlling the class better. He spoke quietly,

"Sir. I am the monitor. All the boys were making a noise. I tried to keep them quiet but they just ignored me."

Mr Akhtar looked at him sternly for a few seconds and then demanded, "Tell me the names of all the noise makers."

But before Ammar could utter a word, Waseem, one of the chief trouble-makers stood up and said innocently,

“Sir. It is the class monitor who makes the most noise. In fact, he is the naughtiest boy in our class.”

“Is that true?” asked Mr Akhtar, looking at the other boys.

“Yes sir. It is absolutely true.” chorused some of the boys from Waseem’s gang.

“Ok, then,” said Mr Akhtar. “Since today is my first day as your teacher, I will not punish anyone. As of today, Waseem will be the class monitor. He will make a note of the name of every noise maker and I will see to it that he gets the punishment he deserves.”

“Yes sir,” said Waseem, proudly. “But what about the ones who do not listen to me and continuously disturb the class?”

“Oh don’t worry about that. All you have to do is put two stars next to their names and I will sort them out in such a way that they will never misbehave again.”

Just then, the bell rang and Mr Akhtar left the room. The boys all sat at their desks silently, while Waseem stood at the front of the classroom, near the chalkboard, with a piece of chalk in his hand, ready to write down the names of anyone who made a sound.

Now what Mr Akhtar did not know was that while class 10 B was the naughtiest in the school, it’s old monitor,

Ammar, was the total opposite to the boy's in his class. In fact, he was the smartest boy in the entire school and was well liked by many teachers as well as the headmaster. Ammar was very intelligent and sensible and loved studying Islamic History. Many of his articles were published in reputable youth magazines and yet he showed no pride. He prayed his salaah regularly and encouraged his friends to do the same. He tried very hard to encourage Waseem and his gang towards Islamic activities but instead, they mocked and humiliated him.

In class, Waseem was taking the most advantage of his new position. As the days passed, the class slowly returned to their noise making and Waseem always had a long list of names to give to Mr Akhtar. Ammar's name featured often on the list even though he spent all his free time reading quietly and he was punished along with all the other boys. Waseem loved tormenting Ammar, of whom he was very jealous and the best way to humiliate him was to ensure that he received a caning in front of the class almost every day. Ammar endured this unfair punishment quietly and not once did he try to defend himself.

One day, while walking in the town, Ammar saw Waseem being severely beaten by a shopkeeper.

"You thief!" yelled the shopkeeper. "You are always trying to steal from me. But this time I am going to call the police."

Waseem pleaded with the shopkeeper who wouldn't listen to him and insisted on calling the police. However,

luckily for Waseem, Ammar knew the shopkeeper and asked him to please give Waseem one last chance. The shopkeeper agreed and let Waseem go. Waseem didn't know what to say. Nobody had ever shown kindness to him before and he hung his head in embarrassment. Waseem saw how ashamed Waseem was feeling and so he put his hand on Waseem's shoulder and said, "Come on, Waseem. I will walk you home."

Waseem was so overcome with emotion that he couldn't speak. He just nodded his head and followed Ammar. When they reached his house, Waseem turned to him and thanked him for his kind deed. He also apologised for his terrible behaviour towards Ammar in class and asked for his forgiveness. After that day, Waseem never put Ammar's name on his monitor's list. Instead, he became more friendly towards Ammar and accompanied him to salaah many times. But he still thought often about Ammar's kindness towards him and one day, he asked,

"Ammar, my brother. Please tell me something. I have treated you so badly on so many occasions, especially in Mr Akhtar's class and yet you never, ever, tried to get back at me. Why is this so?"

Ammar smiled. "You will find the reply to your question in this Ayah of the Quran," he said.

"GOOD AND EVIL CANNOT BE EQUAL,
REMOVE EVIL WITH YOUR GOODNESS,

THEN YOU WILL SEE THAT YOUR ENEMY
WOULD BECOME YOUR SINCERE FRIEND.”
(SURAH HAAMEEM AS- SAJDAH AYAH #34)

Waseem looked at Ammar in admiration. By returning his bad actions with a good one, Ammar had helped him off the wrong path and onto the right one. May Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى grant us all with Ammar's strength and imaan, *Insha' Allah*.
Aameen.

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THE SECRET BAG

Manar watched anxiously as Ammar counted the money.

“Well, bhai....,” she asked. “How much do we have?”

“Only eleven hundred and twenty five,” he answered in disappointment.

“So,” said Manar. “That means that we can’t buy the computer.”

“Yes,” said Ammar. “It seems like we will never be able to save enough money. We will have to save forever if we want to save enough to buy the computer.”

“Don’t lose hope, Ammar” said Manar. “ We’ll just have to save our pocket money for a little longer. And remember, Abba (father) promised to give us the same amount of money as we have saved. So since we have saved eleven hundred and twenty five rupees and abba will give us another eleven hundred and twenty five rupees, we will have two thousand two hundred and fifty rupees in total. Oh..., no. That still won’t be enough. We’ll just have to save more money.”

“Yes, you’re right,” said Ammar, sadly. “It’s just that it’s taking so long and I can’t wait for us to have our own computer. All my friends have them and they say that they’re so cool.”

Ammar and Manar got up to leave the room when all of a sudden, they heard a loud bang. They looked at the direction of the sound in time to see a large brown bag being dropped through the window into the room. They rushed to the window and tried to see who could have dropped the bag but they could see no one. They then carried the bag to the table and opened it. They gasped in delight when they saw that the bag contained a whole lot of money. They counted the money and were shocked when they realised that there was five thousand rupees in the bag.

“It’s a dream come true,” said Ammar. “We can add this money to our savings and after Abba gives us the money he promised, we will surely have enough to buy our computer.”

“No, we can’t use this money, ” argued Manar. “It does not belong to us. We have to tell Abba and Ammi about it.”

“No, Manar,” said Ammar quickly. “If we tell anyone, they will just take the money away from us and then we’ll never get the computer. Maybe somebody knew of our plans and decided to secretly give us the money. Let’s just wait till tomorrow and see what happens. Please. Promise me that you’ll wait.”

“Okay,” agreed Manar. “But, what are you going to do

with the bag now?"

"I'll hide it where no-one will find it," said Ammar.

Manar nodded her head in agreement but she knew that it was wrong to take something that belonged to someone else.

"Ammar is just so desperate for the computer that he's prepared to do and believe anything," thought Manar to herself. "Tomorrow morning, I will just have to convince him that it's not our money and that he should find out who the bag belongs to."

That night Ammar dreamt of their new computer while Manar dreamt that she was locked up in jail for keeping money that did not belong to her.

The next morning, while walking to school, the children's thoughts were only on the secret bag. Manar remembered her dream and said quickly to Ammar,

"Ammar, I don't think that we should keep the money. It does not belong to us."

"But Manar," pleaded Ammar. "We found it in our house. Even if it didn't belong to us before, it definitely belongs to us now. Finders, keepers. You know that."

"No, Ammar." said Manar, softly, not wanting to anger her elder brother. "We are Muslims and we have been taught

that we cannot use what does not belong to us. And if we do use it, we will surely be punished. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but one day, we will have to answer for our actions. If we bought our computer with this haraam money, you'll see. We will never enjoy using it. Don't you remember that Abba said that there is no barakah in haraam money"

"But the money is not haraam," said Ammar. "It was given to us, don't you see? It belongs to us now."

"No Ammar," answered Manar. "It is you who don't see. If we return this money to it's owners, we may not be able to buy our computer but Allah ﷻ will surely give us a bigger and better reward. I know that I am younger than you but please listen to my advice."

Ammar shook his head. He found it so difficult to ignore Shaytaan's whisperings and yet, he knew that Manar was right.

"Okay." he agreed. "After school, I will go to Maulana Sahib and ask his advice."

Maulana Sahib smiled as he heard the story. When Ammar had finished talking, Maulana turned to him and said kindly,

"My dear son. That bag was not dropped for you by an angel or a kind person who has heard your duas. That is not how the world works. If kind people or angels answered everyone's duas, we would not have so much poverty around

us. There are so many poor people in our area and there is no one to help them. I wish somebody could just drop money through their windows too. They surely need it.”

Ammar jumped up.

“Maulana Sahib” he said excitedly, “If I can’t use this money, then maybe I can distribute it to the poor!”

“What a kind thought, Ammar,” said Maulana Sahib, with a sigh. “But you cannot give away something that does not belong to you. A sum of money as large as this must surely belong to someone. You will just have to find the person.”

“But how...?” asked Ammar. “It will be impossible.”

“Why don’t you go to the police station and find out if anyone has filed a report for a missing bag?” advised Maulana Sahib.

“What a good idea,” agreed Ammar. “I will go there now. And *jazakallah* for all your help, Maulana Sahib.”

Ammar went home and told Manar what had happened. She immediately urged him to take the bag to the police station. She didn’t feel good about having the bag in the house. Ammar took the bag to the police station, showed it to the policeman on duty and then explained to him how he had got the bag. While he was talking, a lady from a nearby table suddenly jumped up and ran to Ammar, who was still holding the bag very tightly.

“That’s my bag,” she shouted excitedly to the policeman. “That’s the one I told you about.”

“How much did you say was in the bag?” the policeman asked her.

“Five thousand rupees,” she answered quickly. “Why don’t you count the money?”

The policeman then opened the bag and counted the money. There was indeed five thousand rupees in the bag. He nodded at the lady and said,

“Yes, madam. This is definitely your bag. Here, you can have it back”

“Wait,” shouted Ammar in surprise. “If this is your bag of money, then why did you drop it through my window yesterday?”

“I did not drop it through your window,” replied the lady. “A thief did.”

The policeman continued the story. “Yesterday, a thief stole this bag from this poor lady’s home. There were policemen nearby who began chasing him when they realised what he’d done. As he was passing your home, the policeman were almost at his heels and so he panicked and threw the bag through your window. When he was caught a few moments later, he did not have the bag with him and so we had to let him go.”

“So where is he now?” asked Ammar.

“Somewhere on the streets,” shrugged the policeman. “But he will definitely try again and then we will catch him. As for you, young man, you should be rewarded for your honesty. Unfortunately, I have no reward to give you but don’t worry, Allah تَعَالَى will surely reward you.”

“That’s what my sister said too,” said Ammar as he walked away.

As Ammar neared his home, he was surprised to see a big car parked outside.

“Looks like we have a visitor,” he thought to himself.

And as he opened the front door, Manar rushed up to him, grabbed his hand and said excitedly,

“Bhaijan, guess what? You will not believe it. We’ve got our computer...! We’ve got our computer...!”

“What...? How...?” asked Ammar in surprise, as he saw the computer lying on the table.

“I bought it,” said a voice behind him and Ammar turned around to see his beloved uncle, Hamid Chacha (uncle) standing there. He let out a loud whoop of joy as he ran to his uncle and jumped up into his arms.

“Hamid Chacha, what a nice surprise,” he said. “When did you come?”

“About an hour ago,” replied Hamid Chacha. “And I

brought you and Manar a gift. Manar seems to like it very much. I hope you do too!"

"Oh, Hamid Chacha," said Ammar, his eyes full of tears. "I love it. You couldn't have brought us a better gift. It's what we've wanted for a very long time."

"Yes," interrupted Abbu. "They've been saving up to buy one for quite a while now. It looks as if all their duas have been answered."


"Not only our duas," answered Manar with a twinkle in her eye. "But our good deeds too. We have most definitely been rewarded. Don't you agree, Ammar?"

"Oh, yes," replied Ammar, winking at Manar. "And much sooner than I imagined."

LESSON:

IF YOU ARE GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS,
ALLAH WILL SURELY REWARD YOU.

IN THE QURAN, JUZ 16

Kidhr  is ordered by Allah to rebuild a wall without any payment simply because a righteous man had buried some treasure underneath it for his children.

SO ALLAH SURELY TAKES CARE OF THE
RIGHTEOUS.....! [Surah Aaraf, Ayah #196]

THE SONG OF PEACE

Deep in a jungle, lived a large group of animals. This jungle was like no other. Allah ﷻ had blessed it with the best of everything. Huge waterfalls with crystal, clear water; beautiful, high mountains; tall evergreen trees; sweet-smelling flowers and plants and a large lake with clean water for the animals to drink. The animals that lived in this jungle were also abundantly blessed by Allah ﷻ. They lived together in peace and harmony that never existed in any other jungle on the planet. It was common to see little baby ducklings roaming around freely without fear of being eaten by other animals, and mother birds would often leave their nests full of eggs unattended because they knew that they could trust everyone. The bigger animals usually met at the large lake where they would frolick for hours in the clear water without any fear. These animals always looked out for one another and never, ever, harmed each other. In fact, once, when a group of hunters came into the jungle to hunt deer, the other animals made life so difficult for them that they left after only a few hours. The birds relieved themselves on the hunters' heads and clothes, the ants crawled up their legs and bit them, other little animals kept straying in front

of the hunters to slow down their pace as they hurried towards the lake where the deer could be found. And when they did eventually reach the lake, there were no deer to be seen because they had already been warned by the birds and they had ran away into hiding. The hunters ran way from the forest and decided to return at a later time.

But like every community, there was always someone who was envious and mischevious and wanted to disrupt the peace and harmony. One such animal in this jungle was Mack, the monkey. He was always on the lookout for situations in which he could cause distrust and enmity between the animals but he found it difficult to carry on his plans because of the good relationship between the animals.

However, one day an opportunity presented itself. Mack saw Mr Blackee, the crow, go to visit the golden bird. As the bird was not home, Mr Blackee circled it's nest a few times and then flew away. As soon as the golden bird arrived home, Mack said to her,

“You shouldn't leave your nest unattended for so long, you know. It's quite dangerous. Just a while ago, I saw Mr Blackee hovering over your nest. He took quite a long time and it seemed to me as if he were trying to count your eggs. I am quite sure that he is intending to rob your nest and steal your eggs.”

The golden bird was shocked to hear this story and even though she doubted it, the seeds of mistrust and deception

were sowed. She did not say a word to the monkey and left quietly.

Mack, on seeing how well his trick worked, began to use the same deception on the other animals. He used every situation to create doubt and mistrust, and slowly, the animals began to fear and mistrust each other. They no longer left their little ones unattended or roamed about the jungle freely. Their distrust of each other made them miserable and they began to argue and fight with each other over the littlest of things. The beauty of the jungle began to disappear as the animals began to hate each other. And when the hunters visited the jungle again, no-one made any attempt to warn or protect each other. And so, many animals were killed and the jungle's peace destroyed.

This was the final straw for the dove, the bird of peace. She had watched sadly as the animals fought with each other but when some of them were eventually killed by the hunters, she decided to do something.

“I have to save the jungle,” she said to herself. She knew that Mack was the troublemaker as he had tried to put bad thoughts into her mind as well, but she did not listen to him.

And slowly, one day at a time, she visited each animal, spoke to them about their problems and showed them how they had been manipulated by Mack the monkey. And she would sing her favourite song to them, a song that they used

to once beg her to sing whenever they all got together, a song she had not sung in a very long time.

Oh my beloveds !

Protect yourselves.

By drinking from the cup

Of unceasing love.

Come let's spread

The message of love,

And come together,

To help and be helped.

Replace the enmities,

With patience and tolerance.

To destroy the enemies

that circle around you

The dove's song had much sadness and truth in it and whoever heard it, was immediately affected. It brought them back to their senses as they remembered the happy and carefree days of the past. The animals slowly began rebuilding their trust of each other. The dove's hard work paid off and the unity and love of the jungle gradually returned. To prevent

any more problems, the animals banished all the monkeys from the jungle. And the next time the hunters returned, the animals were prepared for them and the hunters returned home covered in bird droppings, scratches and ant bites. They never, ever returned to the jungle again.

LESSON:

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.

If we stand together with our families and support each other, we will be able to overcome any problem, no matter how difficult.

But when we mistrust and hate each other, it will be easy for our enemies to defeat us.

THE NEW KID

One day, in our Islamic studies class, our teacher said something very surprising.

“Did any of you know when a person gets old, his mind works in the same manner as a child?”

“What....?” asked all of us together, in surprise.

“Yes...,” replied our teacher. “As a person gets older, his mind slowly begins to slow down and his temperaments and attitudes become like that of a child. He becomes more stubborn and difficult and although he behaves like a child, he still expects to be treated as an adult. Many of you live with your grandparents. Think about it and you’ll realise that I am right.”

And as I thought about it, I realised that my teacher was definitely right.

“One more thing,” he said, as we were about to leave the class. “Remember, we must show patience and consideration with our elderly because we will also become old one day

and will want the same care to be shown to us too.”

As I walked home that afternoon, I thought about Abbu. He did seem to be getting more stubborn and grumpier these days and he expected us to do whatever he wanted without any question. That definitely sounded like a child’s behaviour to me.

‘He definitely needed some extra looking after,’ I thought. ‘I would have to work out some plan on how to take better care of him.’

At home, I told my elder sister of my idea. She thought about it for a while and then her eyes filled up with tears.

“What a brilliant teacher you have,” she said. “He is right. And it is very important to take care of our elderly because many of them cannot take care of themselves and they need help. Why don’t we start with our own family?” she asked.

“I know,” I replied. “We could pay more attention to Abbu. He is getting old and certainly needs some help.”

“But,” said Baji slowly. “He has a terrible temper. He may not want us to interfere with him.”

“He’s just that way because his mind is like a child’s.” I said.

“I’m sure he’s just waiting for someone to help him so

that he can rest more.”

My sister agreed, although she was still not very sure. She was very afraid of Abbu and didn't want to upset him. I didn't understand what she was so afraid of. Abbu's mind was slowing down and it would be better if he asked us our opinion before he did anything, just as a child would ask his parent's opinion. I told my other brothers and sisters about my plan and they all agreed. I decided that I would also tell all my friends to keep an eye out for Abbu as he needed looking after. My friends were thrilled to hear about this new 'big kid' and since Abbu had lots of money, they expected him to also have an endless supply of toffees and candy for them. They promised me that they would help me keep an eye on him.

A few days later, Abbu brought five chickens from the meat-shop. Bhaijan took a look at the pile of raw meat and said in a frightened tone,

"Abbu, you should have asked us first before buying all that meat. You've spent so much money. You should have bought only two chickens and we could have used the rest of money to buy Munni's shoes."

Abbu stared at Bhaijan in shock. He then shouted,

"What? Do you think I would buy so much meat for myself? Idiot! I bought it for you all."

He then left the room to look for Ammi. We were all

puzzled by his behaviour. We had expected him to ask us before doing anything. Bhaijan decided to give up but I told him,

"Muneeb..! Don't lose faith. This is just the beginning. Abbu has become a new kid. He will be stubborn in the beginning."

The next day, Abbu came back from office and started shouting at Ammi. Ammi was taken aback by his behaviour and asked,

"What's wrong..? Why are you shouting..? The kids would think that you have lost your mind." Ammi became angry and slammed the rice dish on the table.

"You think that I am out of my mind, Begum. But is it I who is crazy or is it those rude, misbehaved dear friends of your children? I was coming back with the grocery shopping, since tomorrow is Sunday. I had bought Munni's new shoes too, as you asked. When all of a sudden, just as I stepped out of the rickshaw, these kids appeared and snatched all my bags. I screamed as I thought I was being robbed. But then one of them said, "Uncle you are a kid, why did you waste all that money on groceries when you could have bought toffees and candies and gum. They insisted on carrying my bags and I had to follow them home on foot. Something crazy is going on and I want to know what it is, RIGHT NOW..! Call your children..!"

Fear gripped us as we heard Abbu's words. He didn't

sound like a kid at all. He was in total control of his mind. He certainly didn't need our help.

Ammi called for us and we slowly went into the kitchen. My brothers and sisters insisted that I tell Abbu the whole story as it was my idea that got us into trouble.

And boy, was I surprised and relieved when I heard Abbu roar with laughter after he had heard my story.

"Your intentions were good, my son," he said. "But your actions were all wrong. Yes, we should all try to serve our elders and earn their duas but we cannot do that by trying to control them. You don't see me controlling Dadajan's life and decisions now, do you?"

We all shook our heads slowly as we realised the truth in Abbu's words.

He continued, "To serve your elders is to show respect to them and to help them when they ask for it or when they need it. To treat them as children is to show great disrespect for them. Surely you wouldn't want your children to treat you as a child just because your brain and body may not function as well as it once did, would you?"

"No, Abbu," said Bhaijan. "You are right. Please forgive us. From now onwards, we will first ask you if you need our help instead of forcing it on you."

"It's okay," said Abbu. "Your hearts were in the right

place. I know that you did what you did, no matter how disrespectful, because you love me. And your love and respect is most important to me. *Alhamdulillah...!* Allah تبارك و تعالیٰ has truly blessed me...!”

HADITH

OUR BELOVED NABI ﷺ SAID:

“HE IS NOT ONE OF US WHO DOES NOT SHOW MERCY TO OUR YOUNG AND RESPECT TO OUR OLD.” [Tirmidhi Shareef]

SHARIQ'S DIFFICULT LESSON

Shariq was a very spoiled, only son of a very rich man. He lived in a big house with his parents, who had three cars, a driver and many other servants. His father owned a huge business which he had built up from scratch through a lot of hard work. Since he did not have a very good education, Shariq's father wanted his son to get the best possible education and sent him to a very expensive, private boy's school. But Shariq was not doing as well in school as his father had hoped and dreamed. In fact, he was terribly weak in mathematics which was regarded as a very important and compulsory subject in the school. In fact, if a student failed mathematics, he was not allowed to progress into the next grade.

Shariq knew this and was beginning to get very worried.

"What can I do...?" he asked himself countless times.

"Math is so boring that I can't help it if I fall asleep in class. I just hate all those long arithmetic questions. I just can't make sense of it all..!"

What Shariq didn't realise was that he was not falling

asleep in math class because of boredom but rather because he would go to bed very late every night , playing computer games.

One day in school, Shariq heard an announcement that made him very excited. His math teacher was leaving and his class was to get a new, younger teacher from another city. His old teacher had been very strict and was not sympathetic at all to Shariq's math problems, so he made dua that this new teacher would be different. His duas were answered. Not only was this new teacher, Mr Khan, much younger than his older one, but he was also much more softer, friendlier and kind-hearted. He didn't scold any of the students but rather explained all the calculations patiently. Shariq just knew that he would be able to count, on Mr Khan to help him.

On his first day, Mr Khan gave all the children a test to see their level of understanding. All the children did well except Shariq. Mr Khan called him aside after class and gently asked him about his results.

"You have to try harder," said Mr Khan. "If you carry on getting these marks, you will not pass at the end of the year."

"Sir," said Shariq. "I find math very difficult. I wish I were more like you. You are so brilliant. You solve all those problems so easily."

"It is my job, Shariq," said the teacher modestly. "But I had to work very hard too. If you work harder, you too

can do well at math.”

That night Shariq spoke about his new teacher to his parents.

“He is so kind and helpful,” Shariq said. “I wish you could meet him, papa. You would really like him.”

“That’s a good idea,” said Shariq’s father. “Since he is new in town, it would be a good idea to invite him to dinner.”

A few days later Mr Khan came to dinner. The food was delicious and he enjoyed talking with Shariq’s father. After dinner, while the two men were having their coffee, Shariq’s father said to Mr Khan, “Dear Sir. My son is very weak in math. I would greatly appreciate it if you could help him improve his math.”

“Don’t worry,” said Mr Khan kindly. “I will try my best to help Shariq improve his marks in math.”

When Shariq heard his teachers words, he smiled slyly to himself. “My job is done,” he thought to himself. “This dinner was definitely a good idea.”

The next day, when Shariq as usual, could not understand a math problem, Mr Khan kindly called him aside and tried to explain it to him. In his free period a little later in the day, Mr Khan again called Shariq to his class to help him understand all the class work that they had done for that day. Shariq pretended to pay attention to Mr Khan but his

mind was elsewhere, busy thinking and planning the different ways he could succeed in school without much effort.

He decided that one of the ways would be to shower Mr Khan with gifts. Every second day or so, he would bring a little gift for Mr Khan. A pen, a pair of sunglasses, some perfume, fancy writing paper. And he would always give these gifts together with some praise for Mr Khan. He would either praise his clothes or his writing or the way he taught his class. He never stopped finding things to praise. And Mr Khan just accepted all the praise and gifts with a knowing smile.

The final exams were getting closer but Shariq was sure he would get good marks in math. Instead of studying hard like all the other students, Shariq spent his time thinking of ways to bribe Mr Khan so that he would give him good marks in his paper. When Shariq finally wrote the paper, he realised that he hardly knew anything. But still, he was confident that he would pass. But he got the shock of his life when he saw his results. He had failed the math paper!! Which meant, he had failed the grade. He would not be promoted to the next grade along with the rest of his class. Shariq slumped in his chair in shock and fear. He couldn't believe that this was happening. His disappointment turned to anger when he realised that Mr Khan had used him.

“He just took all my gifts and praises and smiled, making me think that he would pass me,” Shariq thought to himself as tears rolled down his cheeks. “How could he be so cruel!”

Shariq looked around him and realised that he was alone in the class. Mr Khan and all the other boys had left the class. "Mr Khan doesn't even have the guts to face me!" he thought angrily.

That evening, Shariq heard the doorbell ring after dinner and was shocked to see Mr Khan standing on the doorstep, with a little bag in his hand. He had come to visit Shariq's dad but asked Shariq to sit in on the meeting as well. When they were all seated, Mr Khan turned to Shariq and asked,

"Do you know why you have failed?"

Shariq could not speak as he choked on his tears. He just nodded his head and looked at the floor.

"Speak up..!" ordered his father but no words could come out of Shariq's mouth.

Mr Khan continued,

"You failed because you did not work hard in the subject of math. You worked hard in the subject of flattery and bribery because you believed that this would lead to your success. You showered me with gifts and praises, expecting me to pass you. But you were wrong. If we teachers keep passing students like that, our nation would be lost in the darkness of ignorance. We would have a whole nation of people with degrees but no knowledge. Can you imagine what it would be like if you were seriously ill and were being treated by a doctor who

earned his degree through flattery and bribery instead of actually studying? Success only comes through hard work and determination. That's the way life works. And the sooner you realise that, the better."

The teacher then put his hands into his bag, removed all the gifts that Shariq had given him over the weeks and handed it over to Shariq's father.

"These are the gifts that your son showered me with," said Mr Khan. "If I could, I would return the praises as well, but I hardly even bothered to hear them."

Shariq's father put his hand on Mr Khan's shoulder and said, "You are indeed a fine man and teacher, Mr Khan. I wish we had more teachers like you. You have done the right thing by failing my son. But I would like to please ask you once again to help Shariq, but only if he shows that he is willing to work hard. He has a tough road ahead of him and will need all the help he can get. Do you agree, Shariq?"

he asked, looking at Shariq. "If Mr Khan agrees to help you, do you promise us both that you will work hard at passing math?"

Shariq, too upset and embarrassed to look Mr Khan or his father in the eye, just nodded in agreement.

"Good," said Mr Khan. "I will tutor you personally and help you in every way possible on condition that you work as hard as you can."

The following year, Shariq followed Mr Khan's advice to the T. He worked as hard as he could and at the end of the year, he passed with distinctions. Mr Khan was very proud of him. Not because he had scored such high marks but because he had changed from a spoiled little child into an honest, pleasant boy who now knew the value of hard work.

LESSON:

WE MUST ALWAYS BE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER BECAUSE HONESTY ALWAYS LEADS TO SUCCESS

HADITH:

NABI ﷺ SAID:

"WHOEVER CHEATS US IS NOT ONE OF US" [Muslim Shareef Kitabul Iman #101]

THE FOOLISH PIGEONS

This is a story of a clever hawk who was very good at catching her food everyday. She watched her prey for a few days, checking their every move. And before they knew what had happened, she would swoop down and carry them off in one, quick movement.

One day, while flying around looking for food, she saw a nest of pigeons. She decided to watch the pigeons for a while before deciding how she would catch them. She began to spend most of her time hovering over the nest, waiting for the pigeons to come out so that she could catch them. But the pigeons were just as clever as she was. The hawk was a big bird and so it was easy to notice her flying high above their nest everyday. And so the pigeons devised a plan to slip in and out of the nest when the hawk wasn't looking. After a few days, when the hawk still did not catch any pigeons, she began to get impatient, frustrated and very hungry. She flew away to her nest and decided to think of another way to catch the pigeons. And after much thinking, she came up with a brilliant idea. She thought over this plan for a few days and carefully planned it out.

“Oh...!How clever I am..!” she thought.

“This plan is perfect. Those pigeons might be clever but I am much cleverer than them. They will easily fall into my trap and soon, I’ll be having pigeons for breakfast, lunch and supper..!”

One day, she approached the pigeons and said in her sweetest voice,

“Brothers and Sisters. Why have you all been avoiding me? I am just like you. A beautiful bird with two legs and two wings. We can both fly high up in the sky. The only difference is that I am a bit more bigger and more powerful than you. I have a sharp beak and pointed claws. I can injure cats in one blow. You poor pigeons have no protection. You are at the mercy of big birds like me. Every minute of your lives is spent in fear, looking out for bigger birds and flying away from them. This is a miserable life to lead. Your lives are forever in danger. But this can all change. I can change your lives for the better. I can give you lives of peace and freedom. I would like to offer you all my full protection. Everyone deserves to be free and if you agree, it will be my job to protect you from all dangers. I hate to see you living like this. But I can do nothing if you don’t trust me.”

The pigeons just stared at the hawk and shook their heads in amazement. They knew that the hawk ate pigeons like them and could not believe what she was saying. The hawk, seeing their mistrust of her, continued, “I want us all

to live together in peace and harmony. Imagine living without any fear of being caught. Only I can make all this happen. And if you agree, I have only one condition. Make me your queen...! And as your queen I will promise to protect and take care of you. With me as your queen, you will be able to start a new life of peace and freedom. You don't have to give me an answer now. Just think about it."

With these parting words, the shrewd hawk flew away. However, she would visit the pigeon nest everyday and repeat her sermon to the poor pigeons, who couldn't decide on what to do. In the beginning, they were very sure that the hawk was their enemy and could not be trusted, but as the hawk visited them over and over, they began to get swayed by her sweet words. Eventually, the pigeons grew to trust the hawk and her sweet promises. The pigeons held a meeting to decide what to do. Finally, most of the pigeons agreed that they could trust the hawk and that they would make her their queen. The few pigeons who did not agree, decided to leave and form their own nest.

When the hawk was told of the pigeons decision, she almost jumped with joy but took care to control herself when she realised that she was being watched carefully by the pigeons. She once again promised the pigeons that she would protect and help them with everything. The pigeons promised to accept her as their queen and to stay loyal to her.

According to plan, the hawk stuck to her promise. One day she saw a cat roaming in a nearby field. She plucked it

with her huge claws and when the pigeons were not looking, she laid it down next to their nest. When the pigeons saw the cat, they began making a huge noise. The hawk swooped down, grabbed hold of the cat and killed it. The foolish pigeons were very grateful to the hawk for protecting them from the evil cat and thanked her many times. Little did they know was that the hawk had deliberately set up the whole scene to make it seem as though she was protecting them.

The hawk would often remind the pigeons about the incident with the cat and how she had kept her promise to protect them. After a few days, the pigeons began to trust the hawk fully and had no more suspicions regarding her. They were happy with their new life and grateful for the hawk's protection. However, one day, as the pigeons were eating some grains, the hawk flew down to them, looking rather weak.

She stared at them and said sternly, "Brothers and Sisters! I am your queen! You have made me your protector. I have been keeping a watch on you constantly and because of this, you have been living peacefully. But I also have needs. And because I was busy protecting you, I have neglected my own needs. You see, I have had no time to look for my own food and so, I have been hungry for so many days. But now, if I don't fill my stomach, I will not be able to stay alive. It is my job to protect you as your queen but it is also your duty to serve me as my servants. To live, I need to eat one of you. This is my right. If I had not attacked that cat that other day, many of you would be dead or severely injured by

now.”

And with these words, the hawk reached out and grabbed a fat pigeon and flew away. The pigeons were in shock. They could not believe what had just happened and fear filled their hearts. They didn't know what to do. After that day, the hawk would come every day to pick and take a pigeon of her choice. The pigeons were devastated. Parts of their family were disappearing every day and there was nothing that they could do about it. They were worried and terrified. The freedom that they had longed for so many years had been stolen from them and their position was now worst that it had been before they met the hawk. At least then, they knew that the hawks were their enemy and they avoided them. Now they didn't know what to believe. Was the hawk their enemy or friend? She acted like a friend but her actions were like those of an enemy.

And so the lives of pigeons changed once again, this time for the worse.

“If only we had been wise and realised that the hawk was lying,” said one pigeon to the other.

“We knew that she had always been our enemy and yet we still believed her lies. It is our fault that we are now in this hopeless situation.”

“You're right,” replied his friend. “But it's not too late. We can ask our old friends for help.”

The pigeons went to their old friends, the pigeons who had refused to trust the hawk, for advice.

The leader of the pigeons said to them,

“My dear brothers and sisters. We feel very sorry for your condition. The hawks have always been our enemies and you should have listened to us when we refused to trust them. It is in their nature to kill us and nothing can change that. But it is never too late. We will help you find a new place to build a nest so that the hawk will not be able to find you.”

And so the pigeons flew away to a new area and the hawk never found them again.

LESSON

My dear friends. We face many people who try to draw us into their world of *shirk* and disobedience to Allah with sweet words and false promises. We must try to be brave and strong and not trust our enemies or else we will end up like the foolish pigeons and our lives will be destroyed. May Allah تبارك وتعالى guide us all, *Insha' Allah! Aameen.*

BRAVE FATIMA

Ihsan was a young villager who sold his land in the village and moved to the city to work. He got married soon after, to Maryam, a simple, uneducated girl. Allah تبارك وتعالى was very generous to Ihsan and soon after his marriage, his business began to prosper and he became well known and liked by the people as a contractor.

Ihsan became very excited when he heard that Maryam was to have a baby and couldn't wait for the baby to be born. But when he got the news that he was the father of a beautiful, baby girl, his excitement was replaced by disappointment. Ihsan was hoping that he would get a son and didn't even bother to look at or carry his daughter. His attitude upset Maryam and when she spoke to him about it, he just shrugged and said,

“Daughters are of no use. You feed them and bring them up and when they are all grown up, they marry and go to someone else's house. It's all just a waste of time and money to bring up a daughter.”

Maryam could not believe what she was hearing.

“My parents brought me up with much care and love just so that I could marry you and be a good wife to you.” She said. “It’s the way the world works. You can’t deny our daughter the love and attention that she deserves just because you don’t like the way the world works.”

Ihsan interrupted, “Don’t try to lecture me!” he said.

“Having a daughter is of no use to us. She has to take care of her husband while a son will always be around to help and take care of his parents when they need him.”

Maryam sighed. “Say what you want,” she said.

“I love my Fatimah very much and I will provide her with everything of the best, especially a good education so that she can make something of her life and get”

Ihsan jumped up angrily before she could finish her sentence and said,

“No way..! I will not let her go to school.”

Maryam looked up in surprise.

“But why...?” she asked.

“It will be of no use,” said Ihsan.

“Don’t you see...? She will not need to learn how to read and write when all she will be needed to do is cook and sew and clean. Surely you as a woman should know

that!”

Maryam stared at her husband angrily but kept quiet. She did not want to cause a problem as Fatima was still very little but she silently promised herself that when Fatima was old enough, she would do everything she could to give her an education.

Two years later, Ihsan’s wish was fulfilled when he became the proud father of a baby boy. He was overjoyed and showered all his love and attention on his new son, Adnan, while Fatima looked on sadly. In fact, she was very afraid of her father and tried to stay out of his way as much as possible. Maryam felt very sad for her daughter but was glad to see her husband so happy. She decided that she would give extra attention to Fatima to make up for her father’s attitude towards her.

When Fatima turned three, Maryam decided to enrol her in the local school but Ihsan disagreed. She tried every argument she could think of, but Ihsan could not be persuaded.

“I will educate my son,” he insisted. Maryam had no choice and gave in— for the time being. She secretly gave Fatima books and newspapers to stimulate her mind. Time flew by quickly and it was soon time for Adnan to go to school. Fatima was now five years old. She loved looking at books and would hungrily go through every newspaper and book her mother gave her. And she was upset when she heard that her brother would be going off to school.

“But I also want to go to school,” she pleaded with

her mother.

“Adnan is younger than me and he is going to school. Why can't I go...? You know how much I love to read and write. I want to be a teacher when I grow up. But I can only do that if I went to a proper school”

Maryam shook her head sadly. “My dear Fatima,” she said.

“Please don't repeat what you have just said to me in front of your father. You know how he feels about girls attending school. If it were up to me, I would have sent you to school a long time ago.”

Fatima could not accept this explanation and continued to argue.

“But Najma, our neighbour's daughter also goes to school and she is younger than me. She doesn't even like school and just wants to stay at home. I love studying so much and yet I can't go to school. It's not fair. In fact Abbu and our neighbour are around the same age. Why don't they think the same then?” she asked.

“Fatima,” said Maryam.

“We must not compare ourselves with others. Your Abbu might be the same age as our neighbour but they were brought up differently and have different ideas. You will just have to understand that in our family, boys go to school and girls

don't."

Fatima always knew this but hearing her mother say it made her more upset. She was also upset with her mother for not standing up for her. What she didn't know was that her mother was even more upset than she was. Maryam's heart broke as she saw the tears roll down Fatima's cheeks but she was helpless. If only she could explain better to her husband the need for Fatima to go to school but he just wouldn't listen. There was nothing she could do but make dua.

Maryam discussed her problem with her family who advised her to teach Fatima to secretly read and write. Maryam agreed that it was a good idea. She bought whatever Fatima would need for her lessons and began giving her secret lessons in Urdu, the only language she was good at. Maryam made sure that she would only begin the lessons when she was quite sure that Ihsan was far away. However, one day, Ihsan forgot something at home and walked into the kitchen unexpectedly and saw Fatima hard at work at the kitchen table. He was shocked and angry when he realised what Fatima was doing. He snatched her book before she had a chance to hide it and tore it to pieces. He glared at Maryam.

"How dare you go against my wishes?" he asked her.

"You know how I feel about Fatima studying and you openly disobeyed me. I cannot believe that you would do a thing like this!"

Maryam looked at him in fear and answered softly,

“You said that she was not to go to school. But you did not say that she could not study at home.”

“It’s the same thing,” shouted Ihsan. “I do not want her to get an education. At school or at home. Do you understand?”

Maryam nodded and Ihsan left the kitchen. After he had left the house, Maryam tried to comfort a crying Fatima, who had decided that even if her mother was not allowed to teach her, she would study by herself. She still had her second notebook and pencil which her father had not seen.

“With Allah’s help I will become a teacher,” Fatima promised herself.

Fatima continued practicing by herself and managed to persuade her mother to check it for her. This time she made sure that she did her studying in her room, which her father never entered. In this time, Maryam had another son, Irfan. Adnan had by now reached the second grade and his father’s continuous pampering had turned him into a lazy and spoiled little boy who treated Fatima badly. His father made him believe that he was better than Fatima and he took advantage of this. He knew that his sister was very intelligent and he demanded that she help him with his studies whenever it suited him. Fatima did not mind because it gave her a chance to learn as well. And because he didn’t want his father to know about his problems with studying, Adnan never mentioned to his father that Fatima was helping him. And so it was a

perfect arrangement. Fatima loved teaching and while helping her brother study, Fatima would use his school text books to further her own studies.

However, life in Maryam's home soon changed - when one day, while Ihsan was away at work, four robbers broke into her home. They locked Maryam and her children in another room and warned them that if they screamed for help, they would kill them all. Maryam and the children sat trembling in fear in the locked room while the men walked through the house, taking whatever they liked.

After a little while, Fatima became restless and began to look around the room. She saw a small window that faced the street and she had an idea. She stood up but Maryam pulled her down quickly. She was afraid that any noise would be heard by the robbers and she asked Fatima to please sit still. As it was, Irfan would not stop crying and Maryam tried as much as she could to keep him quiet. But Fatima would not be stopped. She whispered to her mother, "I have an idea of how to get us out of here. Just trust me." She took her pen and notebook out of her shirt pocket, pulled out a piece of paper and wrote quickly,

"HELP.....! WE ARE BEING HELD PRISONER IN OUR HOME BY SOME ROBBERS. THEY HAVE LOCKED US IN A BACK ROOM AND HAVE THREATENED TO KILL US. MY FATHER, IHSAN IS AWAY AT WORK. PLEASE SHOW THIS NOTE TO THE POLICE. I HAVE INCLUDED

a stone down into the well. A few seconds later, they heard a splash in the water.

“Oh!” said the governor in disappointment. “There is water in the well.”

“Do you think that the treasure could be under the water?” asked the boy anxiously.

“It is too early to say,” answered the governor. He then turned to one of his men, handed him a piece of rope and ordered,

“Khalid. You go down into the well with this rope.”

Khalid quickly did as he was ordered and after a while he called out.

“O Amir, there are ten locked chests down here. A little above the water level, there are big recesses in the sides of the walls. These chests are stacked in them.”

Everyone got excited and the men quickly began the task of trying to get the chests out. It was another long hour before the chests were finally brought to the top. They were very heavy and the governor called for horses to help the men transfer all the chests back to the fort.

The next morning, the governor had all the chests broken open in the presence of city officials and leaders. The Minister

of the Treasury opened up the first chest with shaking hands. But to everyone's surprise, the chest was totally bare, except for one packet of parched wheat. One after the other, all the trunks were opened and they all contained similar packets. When the last one was opened, they saw a leather strip on its top, on which was inscribed, "For desert dwellers, a sip of water and a few grains of wheat very often prove to be worth more than the whole world's wealth, which is why I have saved this treasure for a rainy day.

My companions can use it after me. As far as my wealth and riches are concerned, most of those whom have travelled through this desert were very wealthy, so I have seen the need to take from them and give to those who needed it more. I know that what I have done was not right in the world's eyes, but it was the only thing that I was good at and I pray for Allah to understand my motive and to forgive me." Under the text was Arshad's stamp.

All the officials were dumbstruck and everyone was silent for a long while. Finally, an old chief said, "Poor Arshad! How we misunderstood him...!"

"Maybe," replied the governor. "But you cannot commit haram acts to do good acts. Arshad caused much fear and anguish to our people and he deserved to be killed."

"You are right," agreed the Minister of the Treasury.

"Arshad's intentions may have been like those of a good

Muslim but his actions were not. We cannot harm one Muslim to benefit another.”

The young boy, who had been silent all this while, suddenly spoke up,

“O Amir...! I am sorry for leading you on such a useless search. If you don't mind, I would like to leave now.”

“It was not a useless search,” replied the governor, kindly. “We have wondered for many years about the activities of Arshad and the whereabouts of his treasure and you have helped us find it. And for this, you should be rewarded. Here, take this bag of gold coins with you as a gift from us.”

“No sir. I do not want that.” said the boy quickly.

“If you really wish to give me something, then let me serve you in some way. I do not have a job and I would be most grateful if you could give me one.”

“Alright,” replied the governor. “Due to your honest nature, I have the perfect job for you. I hereby appoint you to be the guard-in-charge of the Bait-ul-Maal (the Islamic government's treasury).

“But, Amir...!” interrupted the boy in surprise. “I am not worthy of such a high post. I would be happy with a lower position, even if it paid a lot less money.”

“Allah always rewards the honest. And your honesty has earned you this job. I hope that you will carry out your

duties with the same sincerity that you have shown earlier.”

“Insha’ Allah,” replied the boy as he said a silent dua of thanks to Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى.

LESSON

DO NOT CAUSE HARM AND FEAR TO OTHER MUSLIMS REGARDLESS OF YOUR INTENTION BECAUSE NABI[SAW] HAS SAID “DO NOT HARM NOR BE HARMED” [Tirmidhi Shareef Kitabul bir was silah #1941]

“ACCURSED IS THE ONE WHO HARMS OR DECEIVES A MU’ MIN.” [Tirmidhi Shareef Kitabul bir was silah #1940]

THE SLAVE

The Emperor was in his court, busy hearing the problems of his people, trying to sort them out and settle right from wrong. He was just about to close the court for the day, when one of his guards rushed in.

"Sir!" he said. "There is a tradesman outside who wishes to see you."

The Emperor looked at the guard and nodded.

"Bring him in." said the Emperor.

The guard went out of the courtroom and returned with a tradesman, who had a slave beside him.

"Oh tradesman!" said the Emperor. "Please state your business quickly, as I was just about to retire for the day."

"Dear Emperor!" said the tradesman. "Please forgive me for disturbing you but I have travelled a long way to offer you a most precious pearl and could not wait another day."

The Emperor, amused at the tradesman words, asked the tradesman, "And where is this pearl?"

The tradesman smiled and then pointed to the slave.

"This is the precious pearl," he said

The Emperor looked at him in surprise and said, "I am very sorry but I don't understand."

"Sir...!" said the tradesman. "This slave is not only a precious pearl. He is a rare gem who has too many good qualities to even count. If you do not believe me then just speak to him and you will see just how rare he is."

The Emperor looked at the slave and asked, "Oh Slave....! I shall ask you 3 questions and if I am satisfied with your answers I will keep you."

"Of course, Sir!" replied the slave. "Ask me what you wish and I shall answer you most truthfully."

"Good!" said the Emperor. "I want you to first tell me- 'What's the relationship between a true slave and a loving master?'"

Without any hesitation, the slave answered, "Sir...! The slave should consider himself equal to his master's slippers and the master should not remove him from that position. He should never look his master in his eyes and should obey every command, big or small. That would be the perfect

relationship.”

The Emperor was most pleased with this answer and then said, “You answered the first question very well. I hope you would be able to answer my second question just as well. Now I would like to know- ‘What is the greatest wish of a person doing Jihad in a battlefield?’ ”

Again the slave answered quickly,

“My Emperor! For a true mujahid, shahadah is much more important than defeating the enemy.”

The Emperor was very happy and pleased with this answer.

“Oh Slave...!” said the Emperor. “What is your greatest wish?” Without hesitating, the slave replied, “My greatest wish is to follow my master’s commands and I am ready to lay down my life for my master’s pleasure. That is my only and greatest wish!”

The Emperor was surprised but pleased to hear this. He immediately said,

“I have been waiting for someone like you for years. You might be just a slave but in reality you are my dearest friend!”

This Emperor is none other than the famous Qutubuddin Aibak. And this slave is the world renowned Sultan Altamash

who took over the Indian Empire after the Emperor.

My dear friends. Sultan Altamash was just a slave of an Emperor but because of his devotion and love for his master, he became the next Emperor.

So, in the same way, Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى is our Emperor and we are his slaves. If we respect and obey Allah تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى in the same manner as Sultan Altamash was prepared to obey the emperor, then we will achieve much in this world as well as the hereafter. *Insha'Allah!*

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